

RICHARD STOLTZMAN

WARSAW NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC
GEORGE MANAHAN, CONDUCTOR

JERZY WITKOWSKI-PIANO WOJCIECH KOWALEWSKI-PERCUSSION

FREDERICK SPECK

FRANK STEWART

BURTON BEERMAN

MARK PHILLIPS



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RICHARD STOLTZMAN

"I never heard so musical a discord, such sweet thunder."
William Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*

Frederick Speck

Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra (1993)

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | I. Andante con moto; espressivo
Interlude; Adagietto teneramente (attacca) | 8:20 |
| 2 | II. Allegro; affrettando | 9:40 |

Frank Graham Stewart

Concerto for B-flat Clarinet and Orchestra (1993)

- | | | |
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| 3 | I. Lento; Allegretto | 6:19 |
| 4 | II. Andante | 5:47 |
| 5 | III. Allegretto | 5:10 |

Burton Beerman

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------|
| 6 | Morning Calls (1993) | 6:19 |
|---|----------------------|------|

Mark Phillips

Three of a Kind (1993)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 7 | I. Molto rubato | 8:05 |
| 8 | II. Moderato | 8:32 |
| 9 | III. Brisk, steady tempo | 3:42 |

Jerzy Witkowski, piano Wojciech Kowalewski, percussion

Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra
George Manahan, conductor

Frederick Speck, once a pupil of Burton Beerman, has eclectic tastes, admiring modernist composers from Alban Berg to the Americans Donald Erb and Joseph Schwantner. These later two composers incorporate tonal materials into harmonically complex works. Like Schwantner, Speck is fascinated by daring colors and textures produced by a wide variety of instruments. He has been clearly influenced by vernacular music, with his *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* showing an affinity for late-fifties third-stream jazz.

This concerto is a consistently inventive work that presents the best of its medium. While some concertos relegate the orchestra to a background role and spotlight the soloist, Speck treats the orchestra as an equal partner, much like Bartók does in his *Concerto for Orchestra*. "The opening woodwind gesture creates a sound world for the clarinet," says Speck, "but as the clarinet becomes impassioned, the orchestra gets lifted into a response

with it." Within minutes, there is an exquisite build-up of tension as clarinet and orchestra contest for the spotlight. Clarinet *glissandi* swirl through an atmosphere shared by the orchestra, which clashes and rattles one moment and rumbles mysteriously the next. Clearly, something momentous is about to happen, and when it does, the clarinet claims center stage. Scale figures and trills spill out like images from a performance poet, first dramatic then sweetly coaxing. A calmer interlude follows, opened by a xylophone reminiscent of the Andante in Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. Says Speck: "Here the clarinet and orchestra have a more intimate and tender understanding of each other." The clarinet sings a haunting *berceuse*, filled with wondrous flavors and scents. Think of it as a stroll through a Moroccan spice stall. But this lullaby is not likely to put you to sleep because minutes later, crashing *tutti* chords intrude. The clarinet first tries to curl back into its tranquil state,

but the percussion won't let it, so it joins the commotion. It runs, slurs, and flutters, as it vies with the orchestra, each element pushing the other to further limits. The clarinet performs staccato leaps that seem improvisatory. To the casual listener, it appears that the concerto has transformed itself into a free jazz piece. *Appears*. But gestures and melodic materials introduced in the first movement also appear in the second, their profiles only slightly changed. As the clarinet assumes a dominant role, the orchestra both contrasts and bolsters it with bars of motoric rhythms, soon joined by *prominente* figures from the percussion. A final legato wail on the clarinet is joined by a startling *tutti*.

This work was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition with additional support from the Indiana Arts Commission.

Frank Graham Stewart is no stranger to popular jazz styles. When barely out of his teens, he played clarinet with *Red Nichols and the Five Pennies*, a Chicago jazz combo prior to the bebop era. Although he loved the music of Art

Tatum and Louis Armstrong, he did not incorporate jazz elements into his early compositions. Finding more in common with the neoromantics than with the proponents of the 12-tone method, he began concentrating on ways to enhance rhythm. "I loved Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, but felt if I changed my time signatures as often as he did, my pieces would turn into a conductor's nightmare." So Stewart decided to experiment with new styles of rhythm, adapted from jazz syncopations, Latin American dual rhythms, and Native American polyrhythms. He also wanted to incorporate humor in his work.

"Sometimes I think music is a little too deadly serious," says Stewart. In his *Concerto for B-flat Clarinet and Orchestra*, he succeeds in speeding past that roadblock.

A whimsical melody opens the concerto, as the clarinet tiptoes around orchestral accompaniment. When the orchestra replies in imitation, it does so dissonantly, intentionally without grace, like a sea lion lumbering on the shore. A clarinet cadenza radiates dazzling triplets and is soon terminated by the orchestra

playing a skewed variation on its previous melody.

The Andante movement provides a meditative respite from these hijinks. Stewart varies the tone color, using several percussive effects: cymbals with yarn mallets, vibes with motors on and off, and four timpani, which have a fondness for *glissandi*.

A great admirer of Beethoven, Stewart creates a scherzo in his third movement that is humorous and filled with rapid-fire invention. Acknowledging that rhythm is king, he inserts sixteenth notes in groups of five. They gleefully violate the 4/4 timing in an isorhythmic formation. This causes a subtle rhythm change and makes the piece move at a lively clip. Stewart uses various instruments to add tone color and contrast to this movement. The clarinet exchanges a bar with a flute, chatters with the marimba, then moodily coozies up to the orchestra. But not for long. A staccato dialogue occurs between the clarinet and two flutes and two oboes, which play notes together in intervals of a second, chirping like exotic birds. The orchestra tries to return things to a sensible course,

but out of nowhere a slide whistle appears and incites the clarinet to more mischief. This interlude inspires the clarinet to assert itself more forcefully. Stewart then uses a device Beethoven would have loved. When the climax occurs, the clarinet seems to end the piece on an impressive *tutti*, but before you can take a breath, it ends it *again* three bars later! The clarinet terminates the piece in a marvelous *glissando*.

Burton Beerman began his musical career at the age of eight, writing gospel songs at \$5 apiece for what he calls "a Holy Roller rock group" in the segregated South of the early sixties. A few years later, he was playing saxophone with various pop performers in the area, some of whom later became famous. At the same time, he was expanding his repertoire, playing classical music in chamber symphony groups. "People in the serious music field," he says, "warned me I'd never be a performer or composer because all that popular influence would taint my music." He needn't have worried. Today he is a concert clarinetist and composer of international repute. Strad-

dling the two realms of acoustic and electronic music, he has presented works as diverse as *Meditations* for electric clarinet, interactive computer, and dancers, and *Jesus' Daughter*, a video opera recently presented at the gallery of the Museum of Modern Art and at Lincoln Center in New York.

He composed *Morning Calls* as the latest work in a series that also included *Night Calls*. "I lost my father when I was nineteen," says Beerman, "and didn't know how much it had affected me until years later." *Night Calls* was such a death-obsessed work that he decided to put away his dark brooding side and create *Morning Calls* (originally entitled *Mourning Calls*), a wrestling match between despair and affirmation that begins at the opening bars. For Beerman, musical conditions are also human conditions. Regarding the compelling title, he says: "*Morning Calls* is the call to life, setting aside the long period of mourning." A plaintive theme on the clarinet is battered by aggressive *tutti* chords and blows from the tympani. "I didn't realize how combative the piece was until I'd played it," says Beerman. Airy sixteenth notes on the

woodwinds create an aura of innocence and fragility. The clarinet's new theme wards off the aggression with humorous banter: bold scalar figures and sly *glissandi*, topped with a jeering flutter. The opening melody returns, but spunkier, more self-assured. Amid jarring orchestral chords, the clarinet reasserts itself, emerges fluttering from its chrysalis. It joins the orchestra in the finale's furious burst of color. The final impression? The demons have been faced down and, while not defeated, are held at bay. But Beerman believes a piece may not be finished when it's done. "In another lifetime, perhaps I'd write a more gentle, more fragile ending. I'd bring the clarinet in very high with strings, maybe even add a high falsetto male voice." While that sounds intriguing, the current ending may be dramatic and beguiling enough.

Mark Phillips began his composing career in the seventies writing modernist pieces in the tradition of Bartók, Stravinsky, Varèse, Penderecki, and Ligeti. These atonal compositions featured highly dissonant chords and disjunct melodic lines. "They didn't have a hint of a backbeat,"

says Phillips. Then in 1988 he won the Barlow International Competition with his orchestral piece *Turning*, which marked his turning away from a more restrictive style and toward a synthesis comprised of jazz, blues, and classical elements. "It's not crossover, it's not third stream; perhaps it's some kind of postmodern hybrid."

The same can be said for *Three of a Kind*, a triple concerto for clarinet, piano, and percussion. He began composing it inspired by George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and Artie Shaw's *Clarinet Concerto*, pioneering works of symphonic jazz. *Three of a Kind* opens with the tenuous grace notes of a piano solo, rising in urgency, ending *agitato*. Soon the clarinet saunters in sporting a languid late-night aura. Insistent marimba chords compete for attention, like bystanders before a TV camera. To the rumbling *ostinato* of the piano, the clarinet wails with yearning, then lightens up, accompanied by blowzy muted brass and those persistent marimba chords. An *accelerando* percussion solo forms a rhythmic bridge to Section II.

A wild party cuts loose in this hot

jazz and smoky blues-inspired movement. Through beating tomtoms and boogying piano, the clarinet exhales sensuous *legato* phrases. Crescendos get raucous and dizzying smears fly out at the listener. Scale figures wriggle within a contrapuntal patchwork inspired by the call-and-response techniques of gospel music. At times you think you can even dance to this music. But if you try, better make it quick. Suddenly, harsh dissonant *tutti* chords appear and challenge this onslaught of sound. Layers of diminished triads and seventh chords, augmented by additional notes, pound away at the powerful rhythm until it dances into the distance; soon, the chords themselves fade away.

A new piano segment appears, sounding suspiciously like the opening one. One would think this has to be the other bookend, ending the piece as it began. But as the TV commercials say, "Wait! There's more!" Not only does this segment end *morendo*, but it gives birth to a motor rhythm in the strings and piano and more wild capers from the clarinet. A stunning drum solo, reminiscent of Buddy Rich or Ginger Baker, opens

the door to a frisky clarinet, a mean piano, and polyrhythmic drums. The piece ends in a virtuosic display, as a farrago of lightning bolts and confetti emerge from the instruments.

Throughout *Three of a Kind*, there is an overriding sense of structure. Says Phillips: "It's like when the late Andy Kaufman did comic bits in a made-up language. Everyone got the punchlines. I want my music to be so clear that people will get the punchlines even if they don't always comprehend all the intricacies of my musical language."

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—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.

Richard Stoltzman

The preeminent clarinetist of our time, Richard Stoltzman has performed as soloist with more than a hundred orchestras around the world, as chamber musician with such distinguished colleagues as Richard Goode, Emmanuel Ax, and Yo-Yo Ma, and as boundary-breaking jazz artist. Playing the widest range of repertoire, from Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, to a huge variety of contemporary works (many written for him), he has won enthusiastic accolades and awards from critics and public alike. Equally well received are his collaborations with jazz and pop artists including Gary Burton, Chick Corea, Judy Collins, Keith Jarrett, and Wayne Shorter. Timely evidence of his continuing and unstinting devotion to new music includes recent recordings of new concertos (besides the ones on this disc) by Einar Englund and Lukas Foss as well as the premiere of William Bolcom's Second Piano Quartet with the Beaux Arts Trio.

George Manahan

George Manahan has conducted numerous performances as a guest artist with many opera companies and symphony orchestras. He has performed with groups such as the Seattle Opera, Santa Fe Opera Festival, Bologna Opera, as well as the Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Washington National Symphony, and the Atlanta Symphony among others. Known especially as a champion of new and unusual works, Mr. Manahan has conducted a number of world and American premieres. He has recently been named Music Director of the New York City Opera. The five-year appointment began officially in the 1997-98 season. Mr. Manahan's recorded repertoire include orchestral works by the pop singer/song writer Joe Jackson entitled *Will Power*. His recording of *Tehillim* by Steve Reich (EMI) was named one of the best classical albums of 1983 by *Time* magazine. A native of Atlanta, Georgia, he received his formal musical training at the Manhattan School of Music.