



presents

JOHN HENDRICKSON, Piano

Tuesday, February 18, 1992

8:00 p.m.

Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

PROGRAM

Icarus (1989)

John Carbon
(b. 1951)

The Perilous Night (1960)
Prepared Piano

John Cage
(b. 1912)

Scherzo (1989) (*Premiere*)

Ellsworth Milburn
(b. 1938)

The Stone Forest (1989) (*Premiere*)

INTERMISSION

Piano Variations (1930)

Aaron Copland
(1900-1990)

Sinfonia (1989)

Tempestoso
Mesto
Volando

Paul Cooper
(b. 1926)

This event is supported in part by a grant from the
Texas Commission on the Arts.

BIOGRAPHY

After graduating from the Shepherd School of Music, JOHN HENDRICKSON has continued to exemplify the best of American pianists performing today. His New York debut in 1988 was followed by concerts at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and Wigmore Hall in London. In 1989, he was a recipient of a Solo Recitalist Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in which he recorded the twenty-four Etudes of Chopin. The Texas Commission on the Arts is currently including the pianist on their touring roster for two seasons.

Equally active as a soloist, chamber musician, and educator, he has an extensive repertoire which includes numerous contemporary premieres. Mr. Hendrickson is an honor graduate of Rice University and was a scholarship recipient to the Aspen Music Festival, the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, and the Adamant Music School in Vermont. He served two seasons on the faculty at the Music Academy of the West and has been a featured participant of the SYZGY, NEW MUSIC AT RICE concert series.

PROGRAM NOTES

Icarus John Carbon

Icarus was composed in the summer of 1988 at the request of pianist William Koseluk. The title refers to the Greek myth about Daedalus, an inventor and builder of the labyrinth, and his son, Icarus, who were punished by King Minos of Crete by being placed in the labyrinth. So difficult was the labyrinth that not even its inventor could discover the way out. Daedalus, however, made two pairs of wings as a means of escape. Before the flight, Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun, as the wax that held the wings together might melt and he would be killed. Icarus, however, was so thrilled by the joy of flight that he disobeyed his father and soared higher and higher, only to fall into the sea when the wax melted.

The mood of the piece reflects the youthful enthusiasm and heroism of the flight of Daedalus and his son and evokes the romantic spirit of the "wanderer". The work is cast as a one-movement rondo lasting fifteen minutes and is intended as a brilliant showcase for the pianist, who at times might seem to be struggling against impossible odds.

— Note by John Carbon

The Perilous Night John Cage

The Perilous Night is a collection of six pieces using only twenty-five pitches which are "prepared" with rubber, weather stripping, bamboo slits, plastic screws and nuts, wood, and cloth. Rhythm becomes the prominent feature in each piece, with sharp contrasts of mood from one piece to the next. Cage's sense of humor is in evidence throughout, and leaves a listener often tapping one's foot.

— Note by John Hendrickson

Scherzo Ellsworth Milburn

The Stone Forest Ellsworth Milburn

These pieces are two of a projected larger set for piano, commissioned by and dedicated to John Hendrickson, and were composed during the fall of 1989 when I was in residence at the MacDowell Colony.

*There are several additional dedications, the first of which are to Brahms and Beethoven, as homages to two of my favorite composers. **Scherzo** is based on a short motive from Brahms's **Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40**; **The Stone Forest** is a translation in reverse of the subtitle of Beethoven's **Sonata in C, Op. 53, "Waldstein"**, and the piece is a condensation of the main ideas of the first movement.*

*Other sub-dedications are for G.B. (**Scherzo**) for his 60th birthday, and for E.R. and R.L. (**The Stone Forest**), for their shared enthusiasm for and insights into Beethoven's Op. 53.*

— Note by Ellsworth Milburn

Piano Variations Aaron Copland

*In being one of the first American composers to move to Paris and study with Nadia Boulanger, Aaron Copland temporarily abandoned his love of jazz, diatonic harmonies and folk music to seek a new personal idiom. The **Piano Variations** represent an ingenious craftsman at work with an angular four-note motif, which becomes rhythmically and harmonically transformed through twenty variations. The result is an enormous structure standing like a skyscraper, having exhausted the compositional possibilities of his dissonant premise.*

— Note by John Hendrickson

Sinfonia Paul Cooper

In mid-February 1989, John Perry approached me with the idea of commissioning a work in celebration of Steinway's 500,000th piano. Immediately, I posed two questions: how long a composition was desired, and what was the proposed premiere date. I flinched slightly when John Perry asked for a 21-minute work, and more than flinched when informed that the first performance would be the same year in mid-October at the latest.

Clearly, to compose a large-scale work for solo piano in less than four months was both a stimulating and an intimidating assignment. Equally clear was the fact that it needed to be a work that extensively explored the ranges, dynamics, and coloristic possibilities of the keyboard as well as providing for markedly contrasting tempos.

*I discarded the options of character pieces, the five-part arch form, and through-composed variations in favor of the classical three-movement fast-slow-fast structure. Similarly, I rejected several working titles to finally choose that of **Sinfonia**, which seemed to me to embrace the totality of the work with its sharp contrasts of tempi, moods, and emotions. The work might be compared to a three-act drama with a few principal characters whose identities gradually unfold, entwine with each other, and together explore the aspects of sorrow and joy, of anger and love.*

— Note by Paul Cooper