



*presents*

*“Reflections on Contemporary Landscapes”*

*PIERROT PLUS ENSEMBLE*

*DAVID COLSON, conductor*

*Tuesday, December 6, 1988  
8:00 p.m. in Hamman Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the  
Shepherd  
School  
of Music



## PROGRAM

### *The Tree* (1984)

Richard Hervig  
(b. 1917)

### *Variations* (1982)

John Harbison  
(b. 1938)

Variation i (violin and clarinet)

ii (piano)

iii (clarinet, with piano)

iv (violin, with piano)

v (all three)

vi (violin and clarinet)

vii (violin, with piano)

viii (clarinet, with piano)

ix (piano, with violin and clarinet)

x (all three)

xi - *Symbol* (all three)

xii - *Fughetta* (all three)

xiii - *Waltz* (all three)

xiv - *Passacaglia* (all three)

xv - *Aria* (all three)

*Finale* (all three)

*Epilogue* (all three)

Kevin Kelly, violin  
Richard Nunemaker, clarinet  
John Hendrickson, piano

## INTERMISSION

### *Soli II* (1970)

Ellsworth Milburn  
(b. 1938)

- I.
- II.
- III.

Aralee Dorough, flutes  
David Malone, double bass

### *A Mirror On Which To Dwell*

Songs to Poems by Elizabeth Bishop (1975-76)

Elliott Carter  
(b. 1908)

*Anaphora*

*Argument*

*Sandpiper*

*Insomnia*

*View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress*

*O Breath*

Lynn Griebing, soprano



## PIERROT PLUS ENSEMBLE

Flutes  
*Aralee Dorough*  
*Elaine Murphy*  
Clarinets  
*Richard Nunemaker*  
*Ann Quinn*  
Oboe/English Horn  
*Robert Atherholt*  
*Denise Roy*

Trumpet  
*Reynaldo Ochoa*  
Piano  
*John Hendrickson*  
Percussion  
*J. Riely Francis*  
*Richard Skains*  
Violin  
*Kevin Kelly*  
*William Chandler*

Viola  
*Rifat Qureshi*  
*Erika Lawson*  
Cello  
*James Denton*  
*Jonathan Tortolano*  
Double Bass  
*Sébastien Dubé*

### PROGRAM NOTES

*The Tree*.....*Richard Hervig*

*The Tree* was commissioned by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Edwin London, conductor, and first performed by them in March 1984.

This composition is (like most compositions) concerned with such basic musical matters as temporal balance and proportion, ascent from low to high, relation of the melodic to the harmonic, polyphony and timbre, and the eternal problem of variety within unity.

The title comes from a passage in Martin Buber's remarkable *I and Thou*, in which he contemplates a tree in all the marvel of its uniqueness and universality, and enters into a kind of relationship with it.

—Notes by Richard Hervig

*Variations*.....*John Harbison*

*Variations*, for violin, clarinet, and piano, was commissioned by Frank Taplin, and was written for Rose Mary Harbison (the composer's wife), David Satz, and Ursula Oppens, who gave the first performance at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival in August 1982. In his program notes for the work, the composer writes:

"The first inspiration for the piece was a statue of a Caananite fertility goddess dancing. It began a dance set: Spirit-Dance, Body-Dance, Soul-Dance and Dervish-Finale. Then it turned into variations, with the same four section-divisions. The first three sections consist of five variations each, and the last is a fugal chase leading to an epilogue."

"The theme is presented in canon, against itself, and is called Variation I. There are five more canons later on, each at a different time interval. The listener will perceive a clear harmonic outline, which gains in flexibility as the piece continues."

At first glance, one might find a contradiction between the abandon of the dancing goddess and the formal order of *Variations*. But the composer finds the boundaries of such formal design to be ultimately freeing. "To my ears", he says, "the most ecstatic musical world is that of complete formalism, which is a sort of ritual thinking. If you have everything conforming to some sort of higher law, that is the true realm of the ecstatic, rather than just pure Dionysian fury. The pieces of Stravinsky which seem to me to be the most ecstatic are also the most reserved, such as the ending of the Symphony of Psalms or the finale of the Symphonies of Winds. There's a certain kind of mysticism which seems to come from formal resolution."



Harbison wrote the variations in sequence, but always with an awareness of forming larger units. One of the structural guiding forces for the piece is the grouping of the variations into movements according to dance character - e.g. the Spirit-Dance, Body-Dance, Soul-Dance, and Dervish-Finale of the original conception. The ordering of instrumental sonorities was also part of the work's design. Harbison departs from the ensemble sound of previous works for this combination - most notably, Bartok's Contrasts - by constantly shifting the instrumental combinations and by using the instruments as solo voices. There is also a very specific overall harmonic ground plan attached to the variations. For Harbison, "one of the real pleasures of listening to variations is the perception of underlying harmonic changes." He says in his program notes that "The Variations have been performed often and prove elusive and challenging. Their classical surface has sometimes lured both performers and listeners into believing they are secure!"

— Notes by Ara Guzelimian

*Soli II*.....Ellsworth Milburn

*Soli II* for two players (flutes and double bass) is the second in a series of chamber works for diverse instruments in which each player is featured in a virtuoso role. It was commissioned by Barry Green, and was premiered by him and Jack Wellbaum at the College-Conservatory of Music in February 1970.

In the first movement, alto flute and bass maintain a dialogue, sometimes blending their sonorities, sometimes making contrasting comments. The second movement is jazz-influenced, using the standard flute and bass, which in the outer sections plays entirely pizzicato. The middle section exploits harmonics on the instrument in order to blend with the high register of the flute. In the last movement bass flute (or alto flute) is used with the double bass, playing reminiscences of the first movement, along with fresh material. There is a game in this movement in which each player plays the music as fast as possible in an attempt to reach the cue at the end before the other. The sounding of the cue notes forces the other player to the beginning of the game, and both resume the race to the cue. In order to facilitate cheating, each player may go from any point in the game to his cue notes, thereby unfairly forcing the other to the beginning of the game.

— Notes by Ellsworth Milburn

*A Mirror On Which To Dwell*.....Elliott Carter

When I agreed to write a cycle of songs for *Speculum Musicae* I decided, first, that it should be for soprano and chamber orchestra. The poems of Elizabeth Bishop impressed me because they have a clear verbal coherence as well as an imaginative use of syllabic sounds that suggest the singing voice. I was very much in sympathy with their point of view, for there is almost always a secondary layer of meaning, sometimes ironic, sometimes passionate, that gives a special ambiance, often contradictory, to what the words say. The order of the songs is entirely mine, alternating as they do between considerations about nature, love and isolation.

"A Mirror On Which To Dwell", a line from the poem, "Insomnia", is the title I chose partly because it seemed to characterize the general world of the poems, partly because I wanted the music to be a mirror of the words and partly because of *Speculum Musicae*, the organization which commissioned the work in honor of the U.S. Bicentennial. Its first performance was by Susan Davenny Wyner and *Speculum Musicae*, Richard Fitz conducting, in New York City on February 24, 1976. The work is dedicated to the artists that gave its first performance.

— Notes by Elliott Carter



This evening's performance is presented in conjunction with the Sewall Art Gallery exhibit, *Drawn from Life: Contemporary Interpretive Landscape*, November 10 through December 16, 1988.