



AMERICAN CLASSICS



BERNARD HERRMANN

Souvenirs de voyage

DAVID DEL TREDICI

Magyar Madness

Fine Arts Quartet

Michel Lethiec, Clarinet



Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975): Souvenirs de voyage **David Del Tredici (b. 1937): Magyar Madness**

Those familiar with only the most popular cinematic scores of Bernard Herrmann may be surprised to find there was a tender, lyrical side to the composer. Likewise, those who know him for his extravagant orchestral effects (nine harps in *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*, for example), may marvel at the exquisite sounds he could derive from a traditional chamber ensemble – the clarinet quintet – with roots extending back to Mozart. Herrmann was perhaps best known for making us wary of taking a shower (shrieking strings in *Psycho*); his own prickly personality (colleague David Raksin once referred to him as a “virtuoso of unspecified anger”) did nothing to soften that image. But in some of his concert works – and some of his film scores too, for that matter – there is a quiet, reserved dignity and compassion that seems far removed from the icy cold remoteness of aliens (*The Day the Earth Stood Still*) or the calculating urban violence of modern society (*Taxi Driver*). Such is the character of *Souvenirs de voyage*.

Written in 1967, the clarinet quintet was Herrmann’s final concert work, and he approached the composition in a positive frame of mind. He had recently fulfilled a long-standing dream of recording his opera *Wuthering Heights*, and although his lengthy association with director Alfred Hitchcock had come to a bitter end, he was now enjoying a promising new professional relationship with François Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*) and a fulfilling personal one with the young woman who would become his third wife, Norma Shepherd. Herrmann was a man of great culture and an ardent Anglophile, and each of the quintet’s three movements has roots in a different artistic work. The first movement was inspired by A.E. Houseman’s poem *On Wenlock Edge* (previously set to music as a song cycle by Vaughan Williams), the second by John Millington Synge’s novel *Riders to the Sea* (also set – as an opera – by Vaughan Williams), and the third by the Venetian watercolors of J.M.W. Turner.

The opening *Lento* is a modified arch form: ABCBCA. It begins with an extended, elegiac clarinet line over a soft chordal bed. The strings begin to develop the idea,

leading to a restless, agitated motif outlining a diminished chord. “Gusty clarinet arpeggios and fluttering string tremolos” (as described by Herrmann biographer Steven C. Smith) suggest the wind blowing across the moors in the composer’s beloved Brontë. In spite of Herrmann’s strong developmental technique, the motif remains to the fore with forthright statements in cello and viola. This *Sturm und Drang* alternates with a wistful *valse triste*, introduced by muted strings. The rhythmic structure is quite sinuous, with duplets and triplets adding an expressive veneer to the underlying 3/4 pulse (indeed, fluidity of rhythm is a feature of the entire work). When this section returns, it is played up a fourth, suggesting a residual sonata form. The return of the opening A section is greatly foreshortened, and ends with a tranquil suggestion of C major.

The middle movement, *Berceuse*, opens with a graceful *siciliano* in the strings, soon joined by clarinet. When that winds down, the clarinet introduces a contrasting idea in duple meter (while a compound figure continues in the viola). The *siciliano* returns, providing an overall ABA structure. Noting the movement’s literary inspiration, Smith suggests the music evokes “a cloud-drenched, autumnal setting off the Irish coast” – the power of film music without the film.

An exquisite F major duet for violins moving in parallel thirds opens the final movement (subtitled “canto amoroso,” or “love song”). Characterized by wide leaps and mild dissonances created by drawn-out appoggiaturas, the melody conveys both affection and longing. This is followed by a passage of surrattng strings beneath the sound of a distant fanfare (the clarinet part is designated *lontano*). Here, Herrmann uses his relatively limited tonal resources to create a remarkably vivid picture – a lesson well learned from his many years scoring radio dramas. A spritely tarantella breaks the mood with a suggestion of revelry, but even though the fanfare temporarily intervenes, the love theme ultimately returns to close the movement.

Like Herrmann, David Del Tredici often derives inspiration from literature, although in his case it is rather famously limited to one author: Lewis Carroll. By his own admission, everything he wrote between 1969 and 1985 was inspired by the poetry and stories of the creator of *Alice in Wonderland*. But *Magyar Madness*, while evocative and dramatic, is not based on any literary source. The quintet was commissioned by (and dedicated to) the Orion String Quartet and clarinetist David Krakauer, who premiered the work at the University of Iowa in October 2007.

The first movement, *Passionate Knights*, is in four broad sections: an introduction, an exposition, a varied reprise of the exposition and an extended coda. It opens with a fiery, dissonant clarinet cadenza that is somewhat misleading, for the level of dissonance will not carry through the piece. Indeed, the work features many passages that are strikingly tonal and traditional, including the first theme of the exposition – a 4-bar, C minor tune for clarinet that would have been quite at home in the nineteenth century. Del Tredici introduces other, contrasting ideas (including a playful *scherzando* motif) but returns to the C minor melody for the start of the reprise. The lengthy coda includes another clarinet cadenza, followed by a segment that wanders unexpectedly into Impressionistic harmonic territory before ending on a quiet, C major chord. In his program note, the composer wryly notes, “This was (one could say) a knight well spent.”

The central interlude (*Contentment*) is for muted strings alone. It is a transcription of a song for baritone and piano (a setting of poetry by Edward Field) written in 1998. The composer himself summarized its character as “sweetly ardent, lyrical and contented.”

The finale, *Magyar Madness* (subtitled “Grand Rondo à la Hongroise”), is longer than the two previous movements combined – an idea Del Tredici says was

inspired by hearing Beethoven’s *String Quartet, Op. 130* with its original, *Grosse Fugue* ending. The commissioning clarinetist, David Krakauer, belonged to an ensemble called “Klezmer Madness,” and asked Del Tredici to write something in that style as part of the quintet. The composer didn’t feel he could oblige, but offered to try “something Hungarian” instead. “What I had in the back of my mind was Schubert’s four-hand masterpiece, *Divertissement à la Hongroise, Op. 54*.” In addition to the “ethnic seasoning” of the harmony, Schubert created a rondo finale in which each repetition of the theme grows more and more animated. “The illusion is that the tempo is accelerating – a wonderful way to enliven what is, after all, mere repetition. The idea of literally speeding up each appearance of a theme over the course of an entire movement – of creating a goulash of musical frenzy – gripped me.”

The movement is built on a vast architectural plan, beginning with an introduction highlighted by a clarinet cadenza. This is followed by the first of three “Grand Rondo” sections, in which the simple G minor theme is rendered in progressively shorter note values. Between Rondos I and II there is Episode I, a “boisterous and energetic” section capped by another cadenza; between Rondos II and III there are two Episodes, both based on the principal theme. A section of the first is meant to sound “from afar” – the strings are instructed to play with practice mutes and the clarinetist to play offstage (but return for still another cadenza). Del Tredici describes Episode III as “wild and dramatic (like dashes of paprika?).” This mammoth movement (as long as many symphonies) concludes with a coda in which the theme appears in G major and seems to be settling into a calm finish – but the composer eventually stirs things up again and ends with a “proper Hungarian frenzy.”

Frank K. DeWald

Recorded live at the Festival Pablo Casals in the Abbaye Saint Michel de Cuxa, Prades, France.

Fine Arts Quartet



The Fine Arts Quartet ranks among the most distinguished ensembles in chamber music today, with an illustrious history of performing success and an extensive recording legacy. Founded in Chicago in 1946, and based at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee since 1963, the Quartet is one of the elite few to have recorded and toured internationally for over half a century. Each season, Ralph Evans and Efim Boico (who have been playing together for over thirty years), Juan-Miguel Hernandez, and Robert Cohen perform worldwide, in such cities as New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Madrid, Moscow, Tokyo, Beijing, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Mexico City, and Toronto. The Quartet has recorded over 200 works. Their latest releases have received

many distinctions, among them Fauré's *Quintets*: "Gramophone award-winner and recording of legendary status" (2012 *Gramophone Classical Music Guide*); Schumann's *String Quartets*: "Key Recording/Top Recommendation" (2010 *Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music*), and Franck's *Quartet/Quintet*: "Editor's Choice" (*Gramophone*, 2010). Releases on Naxos include the world première of Efrem Zimbalist's *Quartet* (1959), Eugène Ysaÿe's long-lost masterpiece, *Harmonies du soir*, Fritz Kreisler's *Quartet*, Saint-Saëns *Quartets* and *Piano Quartet/Quintet*, Beethoven's *Quintets*, Schumann's *Piano Quartet/Quintet*, Bruckner's chamber music, Mendelssohn's *Quintets*, quartets by Antheil, Herrmann, Glass, Evans, and Glazunov chamber music. Other Naxos FAQ recordings include quartets by Dohnányi and Arriaga.

For more information: www.fineartsquartet.com

Michel Lethiec



The French clarinetist Michel Lethiec has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician with the most eminent performers and the most famous orchestras. Devoted to contemporary music, he has given premières of numerous pieces and concertos by composers such as Penderecki, Corigliano, Denisov, Maratka, Ballif, Landowski, Decoust, Fourchette, Scolai, Narita, Brotons, Giraud, Lee and others. He has recorded for Lyrix, Naxos, Arion, RCA, Bis Talent and Actes Sud, with two Grands Prix du Disque, and, as world premières, the three concertos by Penderecki (Arion), as well as a CD devoted to the chamber music of the same composer (Naxos 8.557052), and *Luminarium* by Maratka (Arion). Other recordings include his *Porgy and Bess Suite* for clarinet and orchestra, transcribed for him by Frank Villard (Naxos), and the *Quintets* by Rimsky-Korsakov and Rubinstein (Talent) as well as Bloch's *Les rêves et les prières d'Isaac l'aveugle* and other pieces by Bloch (*Saphir*, with the Artis Quartet and Itamar Golan). He teaches at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris and at the Nice Conservatoire and frequently gives masterclasses at other renowned music schools. He is Artistic Director of the Festival Pablo Casals in Prades, and is Chevalier of the Ordre National du Mérite and of the Ordre des Arts et Lettres.

Bernard
HERRMANN

(1911-1975)

Souvenirs de voyage (1967) 25:10

- 1 I. Lento: Molto tranquillo 10:09
- 2 II. Berceuse: Andante 6:55
- 3 III. Andantino: Canto amoroso 8:06

David
DEL TREDICI

(b. 1937)

Magyar Madness (2006)* 43:52

- 1 I. Passionate Knights 12:10
- 2 II. Interlude: Contentment 6:23
- 3 III. Magyar Madness,
'Grand Rondo à la Hongrois' 25:19

*WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Fine Arts Quartet

Ralph Evans, Violin I • Efim Boico, Violin II
Juan-Miguel Hernandez, Viola
Robert Cohen, Cello

Michel Lethiec, Clarinet

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“When I first became acquainted with the scores of Bernard Herrmann’s *Souvenirs de voyage* and David Del Tredici’s *Magyar Madness*, I was struck by how much these seductive quintets had in common, despite being completely different in mood and style. Both of these compelling works were written for string quartet plus clarinet by distinguished American composers who were pioneers in the Neo-Romantic movement, and both wistfully evoke the spirit of diverse European cultures. They seemed to be the ideal, odd couple. And *Magyar Madness* would be a world première release, to boot, so I felt they just had to be recorded together.”

– *Ralph Evans, Fine Arts Quartet*

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Playing
Time:
69:02