

Neil B. Rolnick

À LA MODE

REAL TIME



Neil B. Rolnick

À La Mode (1984)

Neil B. Rolnick, synthesizers

Marshall Taylor, conductor

Relâche—The Ensemble for Contemporary Music

Real Time (1983)

Neil B. Rolnick, Synclavier II

Douglas Jackson, conductor

Hartt Contemporary Players

Neil B. Rolnick composes music for electronic instruments and for conventional instrumental and vocal ensembles. He performs on a portable computer music system and concertizes regularly. He has appeared as featured soloist with ensembles such as Relâche, Gerard Schwarz's Music Today Ensemble, Musical Elements and the Albany Symphony Orchestra. He collaborated with filmmaker Sandy Moore in a film/performance installation at the Whitney Museum in New York City. He performs regularly as a soloist, in a duet format with soprano Barbara Noska, and in collaboration with other composer/performers.

Neil B. Rolnick was born in 1947 in Dallas, Texas. He studied composition with Darius Milhaud at the Aspen Music School, with John Adams and Andrew Imbrie at the San Francisco Conservatory and with Richard Felciano and Ollie Wilson at the University of California, Berkeley. He studied computer music at Stanford University with John Chowning and James A. Moorer, and worked as a researcher at IRCAM in Paris from 1977 to 1979. He currently teaches and directs the iEAR Studios at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Rolnick's work has been recognized by fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, New York State CAPS, the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the University of California, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. His work may be heard on the 1750 Arch label; this is his debut on CRI.

Notes on the Music

À La Mode was written in 1984, and is scored for eight instruments and synthesizer. The title is indicative of the variety of meanings of the word 'mode' which are relevant to the music. Perhaps most obviously, the harmonic language of the piece is modal.

The piece also calls upon players to perform from a variety of 'modes' or styles of notation. These modes range from strictly notated segments, to repetitions of such segments which are begun and ended by the conductor, to descriptions of musical gestures to be realized by the performers.

'A la mode' means 'in the style,' and this music is drawn from an awareness of many different musical styles. *À la Mode* begins and ends in clear reference to the repetitive and motoric style which has crept into the mainstream of new music over the last decade. However, there are a number of other styles which are employed as well.

The use of various harmonic and melodic modes, the use of different modes of notation and performance, and the use of a variety of styles as sources for my musical materials and processes, have all been tendencies which have grown in my music over a number of years. They reflect my belief that today's culture is perhaps most unique for the inescapable fact that we are all exposed to such a wide variety of styles and influences from around the world and from throughout history. This fact makes our time of high technology and instantaneous world-wide communication heterogeneous in the extreme: we are all immersed in an indecipherable Babel of styles in all aspects of our lives. And in our music as in our lives, we make our identities by sifting through the styles and modes which we inherit, to select those modes which best suit us.

Finally, out of the multitude of meanings of the title, there remains the uniquely American gastronomic meaning: I do hope that *À la Mode* is as enjoyable and rich as a hot slice of apple pie with ice cream.

As the title indicates, *Real Time* (1983) focuses upon the interaction of real time computer generated sounds with a large chamber ensemble. The Synclavier II is a computer and a digital synthesizer which can be controlled with a traditional piano-type keyboard and an array of buttons and foot pedals. The Synclavier's role in the piece is sometimes as a soloist, sometimes as part of the ensemble. The Synclavier makes use of a very wide variety of instrument-like timbres to complement and extend the colors of the instrumental writing.

Just as the Synclavier's function in *Real Time* is integrative, so too is the musical concept behind the piece one of integration of myriad musical perspectives. The harmonic textures of "big band" music of the 1940s, along with some of the rhythmic drive which infects so much of the mid-century swing and jazz, are used to fill out a formal structure which derives from some of the solo meditative music for the Japanese shakuhachi.

Real Time was premiered December 14, 1983 at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, under the direction of Gerard Schwarz, with the composer playing the Synclavier II.

—Neil B. Rolnick

Notes on the Performers

Relâche, The Ensemble for Contemporary Music, was founded in 1977 in Philadelphia. It is an independent professional performing ensemble and producing organization devoted exclusively to the

development and performance of contemporary music.

Since its founding, Relâche has actively investigated and performed music that reflects the variegated history of the 20th century, from fully notated and precisely scored compositions to works that require creative, performer realizations to electronic and intermedia pieces. Relâche maintains an active schedule throughout the Philadelphia metropolitan area with residencies at Drexel University and the Yellow Springs Institute for Contemporary Studies and the Arts, among others. The ensemble also gives presentations in high schools, tours throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and has been featured on a number of programs broadcast nationally over public radio stations. In October 1987, Relâche, in conjunction with the City of Philadelphia and participating cultural institutions, will produce the 1987 New Music America Festival.

Relâche:

Joseph Franklin, Director
Tina Davidson, Associate Director
Laurel Wycoff, flutes
Wesley Hall, clarinets
Stephen Marcucci, saxophones
John Dulik, piano
Guy Klucevsek, accordion
Charles Holdeman, bassoon
Robert Zollman, percussion
Flossie Ierardi, percussion

Hartt Contemporary Players of the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music, is a mixed ensemble dedicated to the performance of the most recent contemporary literature as well as 20th century classics. Highly acclaimed for performance excellence, the Contemporary Players present a variety of concerts each season including numerous premieres. The group is involved in collaborative efforts with area arts organizations such as Hartford's Real Art Ways, and has appeared in New York, Boston and other East coast cities. The Contemporary Players have been heard on public radio and have recorded on the Opus One label.

Hartt Contemporary Players:

Ming-Hsiu You, violin
Pei Ling Wu, viola
Ann Rule, cello
Ching-Hsin Hsu, double bass
Lisa Alvarez, flute
Adriana Dal Pra, oboe
Daniel Zanella, clarinet
Mary Ann Scott, bass clarinet
Ronald Gibson, bassoon
Annette Apice, horn
Augustino Gagliardi, trumpet
Bradley Edwards, trombone
Edward Fast, percussion
Craig McNutt, percussion

This recording was made possible by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Additional funding was generously provided by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

À La Mode (19'30")

Produced by Neil B. Rolnick

Recorded and edited by Werner Strobel

Recorded at the Mandell Theater of Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA on January 26, 1986, using the following synthesizer equipment: Macintosh Computer, Yamaha DX7 and TX7 synthesizers, Casio CZ101 synthesizer, OpCode MIDIMAC software.

Real Time (17'30")

Produced by Neil B. Rolnick

Recorded and edited by David Budries

Recorded at the Hartt School of Music, University of Hartford, Hartford, CT on March 5, 1986, using Synclavier II Computer Music System

À La Mode and *Real Time* are published by Highgate Press/Galaxy Music (BMI)

Cover photography: Phyllis Galemba

Cover props: Richard Schultz

Cover design and art direction: Laura Williams

Production: Rachel Siegel

Library of Congress No. 86-743264

Liner © 1987 Composers Recordings Inc.

© and © 1987 Composers Recordings Inc.

This is a composer supervised recording.

Write for a Complete Catalog of Recordings on CRI

Composers Recordings Incorporated

170 West 74th Street, New York NY 10023

A Not-for-Profit, Tax-Exempt Corporation

All rights reserved, unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.

Printed in U.S.A.

priscilla mclean
barton mclean

dance of dawn
spirals



BARTON and PRISCILLA McLEAN are not only husband and wife and professional composers; they are also a versatile travelling duo called The McLean Mix. As such, they specialize in live as well as taped electronic and instrumental music, touring the mid-West in 1974 and subsequently the East and West Coasts.

PRISCILLA McLEAN Dance of Dawn (1974)

*thunderous sun roaring away the abyss
riotous life-noises scream the air
senseful
rougeyellow leers white light eyeprying
footfall din is lost in*

*the jeers of the catmoon
— P. M.*

LIFENOISES

An alteration and subtle change of motivic ideas propels the work, beginning with string-like minor seconds, gradually coalescing into a repeated rhythm which then separates itself by silences and slowly widening intervals (the interval of a second is a major cohesive factor throughout the work).

THUNDEROUS

Rhythmic propulsion, distilled from the early percussive sounds, gains strength by the second half of the work. Highly filtered "jew's harp" sonorities (beginning 13' into the piece) and marimba-like qualities combine and invade the returned string-like fabric until shattering cross-rhythms and brittle timbres explode into a panning effect of violent drum-like (timpani) rolls.

SUN ROLLING

An evocative melody of undulating character keeps recurring in different guises usually at or immediately after structural climaxes. This melody, altered, becomes a polyphonic "choir" of sounds approximately one third of the way into the piece, eventually fusing with clanging repeated tones and rhythms in a section of dense polyphony.

LEERS WHITE LIGHT

Emerging from the beginning texture is a static chord-cluster, structured from previous sonorities, which recedes and reappears at key temporal locations. At times this becomes a ring-modulated chord gradually fluctuating and subtly changing, occurring as the antithesis to previous "chaotic" and complex sections. These areas of stasis are the peace, the philosophical reflection, the calm that accepts and sorts the "senseful" experience into a coherent intention; the transparent white light.

LIFENOISES

A side-note: A few minutes into the composition is an unintentional Morse Code communique, first noticed by another listener, a CQ (standard signal from a caller who is trying to communicate with anyone who can hear and understand his sounds). The parallel to the composer's basic intention is intriguing.

PRISCILLA McLEAN (b. Fitchburg, Mass., 1942) received her musical training at Massachusetts State College at Lowell and Indiana University (M. M. in Composition, 1969). Her principal teachers were Richard Kent, Thomas Beversdorf and Bernhard Heiden, and in electronic studio technique, Michael Babcock. Among her most recent instrumental compositions is a commissioned Bi-Centennial work *Messages*, premiered in 1975 by the Indiana University (South Bend) Contemporary Chorus and Chamber Ensemble. Since 1974 she has been co-directing a national radio series of works by members of the American Society of University Composers. Recent live electronic activities include performances with John Eaton, David Cope, Burt Beerman, and Barton McLean. Since 1973 she has been on the composition faculty of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind.

BARTON McLEAN Spirals (1973)

*Phrase-wisps melting into pedals
and drones . . .
jazzy licks spiralling upward and beyond*

Composers, particularly in the electronic medium, must not only create their realization, but must also fashion, for each new work, an all-inclusive and self-contained universe of sound which draws all components into its orbit, compelling them to obey its unique laws.

*melodies which appear as smoke wisps
turning, in, on, and around
harmonies responding, unpolluted by
equal temperament*

Labelling a work "electronic" should not automatically relegate it to the stereotype of the machine esthetic. To the contrary, it must be possible and desirable to counterbalance this tendency with a concept which accentuates all of the human qualities associated with music and life.

*myriad shapes floating toward a liquid horizon
in a sea with islands of sudden focus . . .
unbalancing . . .
conservatory-bred senses of time!*

What is the shaping of a new sound-universe if it is not principally the restructuring of time relationships, and the reorientation of the sonic material around this new time orbit?

*quiet, reflective soundpools . . .
white hot thermomusical explosions
igniting the ear*

Can they all be contained in one universe?

—B.M.

Barton McLean adds: "My wife and I have found the experience of actively composing in the same household interesting and exciting. To the extent that any two composers can get along together, we do, despite the obvious differences in our compositional styles. One can imagine the problems — two composers and one electronic studio, or one piano, or one needing quiet while the other needs to make noise, not to mention the problem of all composers and their egos. We have managed to solve the first set of problems by teaching on alternate days and by capitalizing on our work habits, I being a day and she a night person. The second, potentially more serious problem just does not exist for some reason. We do not compete with one another, but instead encourage each other's success."

BARTON McLEAN (b. 1938) graduated from SUNY at Potsdam, received his M. A. from Eastman, and his Mus. D. in composition from Indiana University. His principal teachers were Henry Cowell, Thomas Beversdorf, and Bernhard Heiden, and, in electronic studio technique, Michael Babcock and Bruce Hemingway. He is now director of composition, electronic music, and theory at the South Bend campus. He is also active in broadcasting and is on the Executive Committee of The American Society of University Composers. Recent activities include the premiere of *Dimensions II* for piano and tape over the BBC, and a coast to coast broadcast of *Metamorphosis for Orchestra*.

This recording was made possible by a partial grant from Indiana University.

Produced by Carter Harman
Cover by Judith Lerner

DANCE OF DAWN—unpublished (ASCAP): 22'05"

SPIRALS—unpublished (ASCAP): 20 min.

Barton McLean's GENESIS, THE SORCERER REVISITED, and DIMENSIONS II FOR PIANO AND TAPE appear on Orion records. (ORS-75192).

LC#: 75-750173

© 1975 Composers Recordings, Inc.

THIS IS A COMPOSER-SUPERVISED RECORDING