



A view from Charles Bridge

Marc W. Rossi

Moon-Mirror, Denying the Abyss

Frank Graham Stewart

Scherzo for Orchestra

John Biggs

Salutation

William Thomas McKinley

Symphony No. 6 ("Prague")

Roman Janál, baritone

Czech Radio Symphony

Vladimír Válek



Composer and jazz pianist **Marc W. Rossi** received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Composition from the New England Conservatory in Boston. His principal teachers were William Thomas McKinley (composition), Donald Martino (graduate seminar), George Russell, Jimmy Giuffre, Jaki Byard (Jazz studies), and Peter Row (sitar). Since then he has continued private studies in composition and orchestration with Frank Bennett, and jazz improvisation with Charlie Banacos.

Rossi's music has been performed and recorded by: The Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra; the Silesian Philharmonic; concert pianists Jeffrey Jacob and Cameron Grant; the New England String Quartet; cellists Xin-Hua Ma and Raphael Popper-Keizer; the Essex Chamber Music Players; soprano Margot Emery and pianist William Merrill; sitarist Peter Row; Indian classical guitarist Prasanna; The Jimmy Giuffre 4; Stan Strickland and Ascension; and The Berklee Faculty Jazz Orchestra, to name a few. As a keyboardist, Rossi has recorded and toured with George Russell's Living Time Orchestra, Stan Strickland and Ascension, The Jimmy Giuffre 4, Bo Diddley, Natraj, The Row and Rossi Project, and the Marc Rossi Group.

Rossi's music has been favorably re-

viewed in *Fanfare*, *American Record Buyer's Guide*, *The Boston Globe*, and *New Music Connoisseur*. His original jazz CDs have been favorably reviewed in *Jazz Times*, *LA Jazz Scene*, *Morrice's Internet Jazz Review*, and *All About Jazz*. Rossi was the subject of a feature article in *Downbeat* magazine citing his work in the contemporary classical, jazz, and world music idioms. Concert pianist Jeffrey Jacob had this to say: "The music of Marc Rossi is intensely expressive. He uses the greatest diversity of means from the melodic lyricism of the *String Quartet* to the orchestral grandeur of *Negru Voda* to the evocative sonorities and rhythms of *Three Jazz Sutras* to produce consistently compelling music of haunting beauty and striking originality."

Rossi has been on the faculty of Tufts University and New England Conservatory, and is an Associate Professor at the Berklee College of Music, Boston, where he has taught since 1989. For more about Marc W. Rossi please visit: www.marccrossi.com.

Moon-Mirror, Denying the Abyss

"*Moon-Mirror, Denying the Abyss* reflects triumphs and disappointments in my life," says composer Marc Rossi. "I think of it as late twentieth-century 'pro-

gressive romanticism.'" This post-modern piece begins and ends with a stark flamenco-like motive that expands melodically and harmonically and resolves. At first, its repeating figure produces a hypnotic effect, but at 2:00, there is a sea change of clashing chords and increasingly complex chromaticism. A minute later, the main melody returns on alto flute and expands with orchestral involvement. Rossi says that Mahler is one of his influences, and certainly the deep lyricism and sadness of Mahler's late symphonies infuse the work. The tempo picks up, develops and variegates, taking on jarring dissonances and sub themes; at 5:45, a half dozen passionate chords suddenly strike like gusts of wind. A tumultuous mood then engulfs the piece for two minutes. By 7:00, a *legato espressivo* signals the second motive. At first, the melody is restful, yet it is soon taut with premonition. We feel that something momentous will soon happen and it does: while the ostinato-like theme is playing, the tempo gradually increases with an ominous crescendo. A devotee of the concert and film music of Takemitsu, Rossi suggests a segment for a film score about a person trying to escape William Blake's "mind-forged manacles." He leads us into the *Maestoso* section, with its urgent strings and brass instruments, within a

tempestuous musical atmosphere. A *ritardando* mercifully occurs and *Moon-Mirror* concludes almost contemplatively, but not in a conventionally restful way. As the piece resolves, there are distant echoes of the tense opening sequence and the piece ends on a note of resigned introspection.

"I draw on classical Indian ragas for melodic inspiration," says Rossi, "for they have a penetrating lyricism I find compelling when combined with exquisite use of cyclical form." Indeed some of *Moon-Mirror's* structure follows the raga's developmental arc, particularly within sections that begin *lento* and conclude *presto*.

The composer expresses these additional thoughts about *Moon-Mirror*: "This work is a complex and dramatic symphonic poem in a single movement, punctuated through sectional development and repetition. It is lyrical with three central motives and themes stated both independently and in tandem. As the piece develops the themes are transformed and layered to fit the dramatic moment. The final climax reflects the greatest point of psychological unity and dramatic impact. The piece unfolds as a story, but one with no specific programmatic content other than the piece's expressive needs. One main leitmotiv and the following repeated

cadential phrase serve as points of arrival.

"*Moon-Mirror's* musical language is lyrical, modal, and chromatic. As a jazz musician, the music and philosophies of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and George Russell influence me. Some harmonic language of the piece during the main development section is influenced by Miles Davis' landmark recording *Bitch's Brew*. It is harmony based on symmetrical division of the octave.

"The title *Moon-Mirror, Denying the Abyss* is inspired by the poetry of Rumanian poet Paul Celan, a survivor of the Nazi death camps, and the poetry of Tibetan Buddhist master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche."

Frank Graham Stewart is a native of Colorado. He became interested in music at an early age, starting first with piano lessons, then adding clarinet studies. As a young boy, he had opportunities to see and hear festivals of American Indian dances and songs of tribes living in the southwestern United States. This began an interest in writing melodies and drum accompaniments based on these songs.

Upon graduation from high school he received a scholarship to attend Eastman School of Music. His principal composition teacher was Bernard Rogers who further developed his sensitivity to

musical color. Bela Bartok's dynamic rhythms, harmonies and interest in folk music have also been strong influences, as well as American jazz and the possibility of using serial ideas in music. In addition to his studies at Eastman he also received a scholarship to study with Roger Sessions.

During the Second World War, Stewart served in an U.S. Army Field Band as a clarinetist, arranger, and composer. During this time his works were broadcast over WNYC, including his composition *Suite for Orchestra*, which was conducted by Leon Barzin. After the war Douglas Moore awarded Stewart the Alice M. Ditson Fellowship in Music Composition at Columbia University. After working as a free-lance composer, performer and teacher in California, he returned to Colorado to complete his Master's degree.

He went on to receive a Ph.D. at Michigan State University where he studied with Owen Reed. His doctoral thesis was a one-act opera, which won a contest sponsored by Mannes College of Music, and was given performances at the 92nd Street Y in New York City with Paul Berl conducting.

Stewart has written many compositions for various groups and chamber ensembles including the traditional string

quartet, woodwind quintet, and brass quintet as well as works for symphonic band, and the three orchestral works and two concertos included on this CD. His music has been performed throughout the United States including a "Tocatta" for piano solo commissioned by Joseph Banowitz (published by Neil A. Kjos). He has won a number of prizes and awards, including the Orpheus Award from Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and the Virginia College Band Directors National Association. He is also a National Arts Associate of Sigma Alpha Iota.

Scherzo for Orchestra

From the late eighteenth century until now, the scherzo evolved from its original status as a wry replacement for the minuet. Beethoven took the form and developed it further, where it often became a jesting style applied to a musical movement. Today its mood usually ranges from light and playful to sinister and macabre. "Sometimes I think music is a little too deadly serious," says Stewart. His *Scherzo for Orchestra* uses four techniques common to the scherzo to create its whimsical effects.

1. "Occasional unexpected interruptions of the rhythmic flow; for instance, silence (which can sometimes be deafen-

ing!)." The use of rests in the first ten bars is jolting and creates a tantalizing tension. Its staccato five-note figure pummels the ears and resurfaces elsewhere in the piece.

2. "Changing time signatures in which the background of a beat changes from division into two parts, to a beat that divides into three parts, with each of those parts always being equal in time value" Between 1:10 and 1:40, the time signatures change from 4/4 to 8/8 to 7/8 to 9/8 then to 6/8. The woodwind and cellos convey an airy spontaneous feel while the strings, particularly the cello and bass try grounding it with somber notes. Fragments of a children's folk song saunter in, uninhibitedly.

3. "Inclusion of a section of Latin-American influence that involves simultaneous rhythms of two pulsations per beat against rhythms of three pulsations per beat." From 2:00 to 2:25, the percussion, harp, and woodwinds engage in an eerie theme whose rhythms seize hold of the imagination and immerse it in an exotic culture. As Stewart says, it is "a complex combination of two quarter-note triplets combined with 16 sixteenth notes in a basic pattern of 4/4 meter. It is one of the legato, smooth-flowing melodies, heavily saturated with a dose of early twentieth century chromaticism." Yet

true to the scherzo form, the melody doesn't stick around long. It is soon supplanted by one of the "march-like rhythms" that rise *poco a poco crescendo*, seemingly toward a climax, yet it doesn't happen yet. A charming banter first has to take place between the woodwinds, the percussion, and the harp. There is another section of Latin American influence at 3:16 to 3:58, a combination of six sixteenth notes with two dotted 8th notes.

4. "Straightforward march-like rhythms." Listen to the crescendo that begins around 2:45 and hear the "straightforward march-like rhythm" it assumes around 3:10, then suddenly abandons at 3:20. Finally at the end Stewart presents us with a satisfying tutti march, so short it is almost a parody of a military band.

Born in Los Angeles on October 18, 1932, **John Biggs** received his Masters degree in composition from the University of California at Los Angeles, doing further study at the University of Southern California and the Royal Flemish Conservatory in Antwerp, Belgium. His teachers include Roy Harris, Lukas Foss, Ingolf Dahl, Flor Peeters, Halsey Stevens, and Leonard Stein.

As an educator, he has taught at Los Angeles City College, UCLA, UC Berkeley, and served as composer-in-residence

to six colleges in Kansas under a grant from the Department of Health, Education, & Welfare. As a performer he founded the John Biggs Consort, which toured internationally under Columbia Artists Management, specializing in medieval, renaissance, and 20th century music. As a composer he has won numerous awards and honors including a Rockefeller Grant, Fulbright Grant, Atwater-Kent Award, ASCAP Serious Music Award every year since 1974, and a number of Meet the Composer grants from diverse parts of the United States.

Salutation

Composer John Biggs wrote *Salutation* to pay special homage to the members of the Ventura County Symphony League. To determine his thematic outline, he chose a method used by composers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Using *soggetto cavato* ("carved subject"), the composer derives the melody by carving out all the vowels from the name of the honored person, then translates these vowels into the musical symbols DO (UT in some countries) RE MI FA SOL LA TI DO. In the case of *Salutation*, Ventura County Symphony League translates to the melodic sequence RE UT FA DO UT DO RE LA UT RE. This explains the

opening melody, but what about the rest of the piece? Biggs proceeds to create ingenious variations of this theme for the next two minutes, then subtly weaves the melody into an orchestral crescendo that dramatically transforms the piece. A percussive interlude on xylophone introduces a new theme, which is echoed by the orchestra. A lyrical melody by the brass ensues, imparting a whiff of Aaron Copland to the mix. Suddenly it is broken off by an assertive figure, again with the brass; a clarion call in a major key, forward moving and propulsive. The figure repeats with stirring brass accompaniment and becomes a fitting tribute to the orchestra. Yet just when we think the piece will end with a *fortissimo* crash of affirmation, Biggs surprises us. He pulls the stops, and for the last few moments the piece winds down, ending with a quiet yet firm declaration.

William Thomas McKinley was born in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, December 9, 1938. One of the most highly regarded and well-known composers of his generation, McKinley learned both classical and jazz piano at a very early age, became a member of the American Federation of Musicians at twelve, and has since pursued a diverse and intensely active professional career in both fields. To

date, he has composed over 300 works, is listed in the 2001 edition of *Groves' Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and has received commissions from the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, the Fromm Foundation and the Naumburg Foundation. His many awards and grants include, among others, an award and citation from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and eight NEA grants. His oral biography is documented in the Major American Composers Series at Yale University, and *William Thomas McKinley: A Bio-Bibliography*, a biography and complete catalog of his works, has been published by Greenwood Press.

As a jazz pianist, he has performed, composed, and recorded with the likes of Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, Eddie Gomez, Gary Burton, Miroslav Vitous, Rufus Reed, Ray Hughes, and Billy Hart, to name a few. McKinley has studied with many renowned teachers and composers, including Aaron Copland and Gunther Schuller.

Previous years have produced an abundance of performances and recordings of McKinley's work. To name a few: the RCA Red Seal recording, with clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, of the *Clarinet Sonata* with Irma Vallencillo and the *Second Clarinet Concerto* with the Berlin

Radio Symphony under Lukas Foss; the London Symphony's recording of *Wind, Fire and Ice*, as well as his *Violin Concerto No. 1*; the fourth performance of his *Emsdettener Totentanz* at the Musiksommer Festival in Quedlinburg, Germany, where McKinley served as the Guest Composer-in-Residence. McKinley's arrangements of numerous pop songs were performed by the Seattle Symphony as a part of the *Cyberian Rhapsody*: the first major live orchestral concert to be broadcast on the internet. McKinley has appeared on the Koch, Owl, RCA Red Seal and MMC labels.

Symphony No. 6 ("Prague")

The opening of Thomas McKinley's Symphony No. 6 is placid, like a small lake rippling with zephyrs. From the first few bars, we realize it will not be long before the zephyrs turn into gale force winds. The chords slowly rise, percussion enters and a lone discordant horn conveys that the storm is brewing. At 3:00, rhythmic string figures enhance the tension, joined by a perky xylophone. At 3:50, a blowsy dance melody briefly appears and vanishes like a falling autumn leaf. More full-figured dance rhythms appear, brightening the palette as the music intensifies. At 7:00, the tempo drops

and the orchestral coloration thickens. For the last minute of the movement, a slow deliberate rhythm pervades the orchestra, like one from a Shostakovich war time symphony. McKinley's second movement, a Scherzo, begins in a dazzling hurry as if rushing down a steep country hill. There is an explosion of timbre as yellow and bright blue sounds from the brass and strings fill the musical landscape. McKinley uses intriguing devices to create the sense of erratic movement: abrupt chords on brass with dramatically placed rests, fluttering demisemiquavers on strings, motoric rhythms, even a wry snippet from Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. It never lets up, it just gets jazzier and more frenetic. Listen to the percussion at 4:40 and note how seamlessly it blends with the ensuing brass rhythms.

McKinley says this about the movement: "The addition of the [fourth movement] poem considerably changed the work's formal possibilities, and I then knew that I needed an additional movement in order to make a complete symphonic statement. Therefore, I composed an 'American' *scherzo* to contrast with the atmosphere of the other movements, particularly the fourth with its use of text and the solo baritone. In other words, I decided to place the *scherzo* as the second

movement in order to have its 'jazzy' element gradually recede into the memory, allowing the Czech inspiration to take over the drama in the third movement and culminate in the fourth movement finale based on the Czech text."

The third movement begins with an aggressive string pizzicato, lively but not as vigorous as the previous movement. Tympanis collide with strings to create a sense of conflict; at 3:06 a bizarre dance ensues with woodblocks, cowbells, xylophone, marimba and piano, a late twentieth century twist on the puppet's dance in Bartok's ballet *The Wooden Prince*. A somber mood takes over in the adagio, but one drained of sentimentality, like a Weimar suite from the 1920's. Two macabre rhythmic segments on xylophone and vibraphone contrast with the grave orchestral segment that follows. The last minute provides a tense extended coda.

For the final movement, McKinley orchestrates Czech poet Jaroslav Seifert's religious poem. The singer's chromatic declamatory style matches the poem's themes of despondence and homesickness. The emphatic (and sometimes jarring) orchestral accompaniment punctuates the poem's more searing lines, particularly the final one: "It is miraculous."

A View from Charles Bridge

(Jaroslav Seifert)

*The rain had long since stopped.
In the pilgrimage church in Moravia,
where I had sought shelter from a storm,
they were chanting a Marian song
which stopped me from leaving.*

*I used to listen to it back home.
The priest had genuflected at the steps and
left the altar,
the organ had sobbed and fallen silent,
but the throng of pilgrims did not move.
Not until minutes later did the kneeling rise
and singing
without turning their heads,
all move backwards together
towards the open portals.*

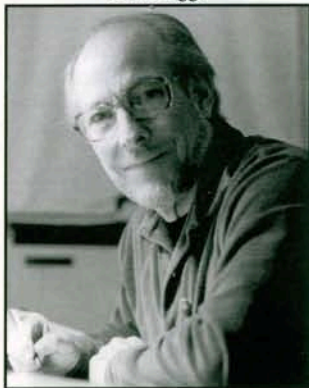
*Never did I return there, never
again stand under the foliage of limes,
where the white banners waved
under the buzz of the bees.
I was homesick for Prague,
even though I'd only briefly stayed
outside her walls.*

*Day after day I gaze in gratitude
on the Castle of Prague
and on its Cathedral:
I cannot tear my eyes away from that picture.
It is mine
and I also believe it is miraculous.*



Marc W. Rossi

John Biggs



Frank Graham Stewart

William Thomas McKinley



Baritone **Roman Janál**, one of the Czech Republic's leading singers, studied violin at the Conservatory of Music in Pilsen as well as the Prague Academy of Performing Arts. In 1985 he was advised by several associates to pursue studies in singing at the Music Academy in Sofia, Bulgaria. During his studies he sang at the Sate Opera in Sofia in *Don Giovanni* and *Eugene Onegin*. After completing his studies in Sofia, he accepted his first opera engagement in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia, and shortly afterwards moved to Prague to join the Mozart Chamber Opera.

In 1994 Janál became a soloist of the Opera Theater in Pilsen and in 1995, after a very successful debut with the State Opera in Prague in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Così fan Tutte*, he became one of their soloists. In 1995 he won first prize in the thirtieth International Singing Competition of Antonín Dvorák in Karolovy Vary. Janál has been featured on CDs, including Schubert's Mass in G major, and Dvorak's *Te Deum* and the opera *Armida* (with the Czech Philharmonic). In addition to an active singing career, appearing in solo recitals, and with orchestras around Europe, Janál, since 1995, has been a member of the faculty at the Prague Conservatory of Music.

Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra

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