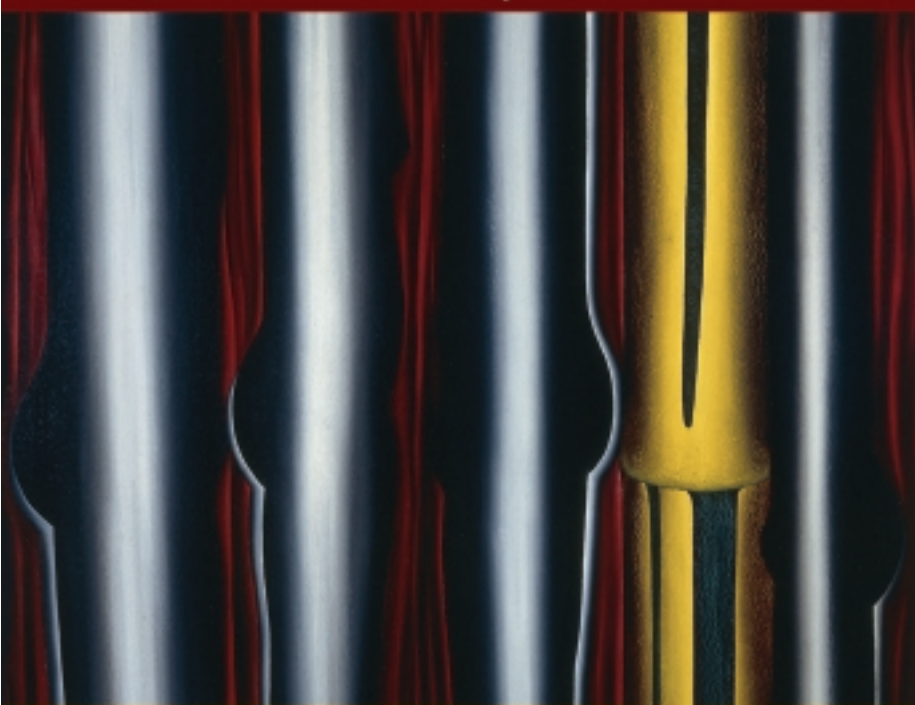


# TWENTIETH CENTURY OBOE CONCERTOS

by Marco A. Yano, Pawel Sydor, and Bohuslav Martinů



Alex Klein, oboe

Czech National Symphony Orchestra • Paul Freeman, conductor

## About the Cover Art

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### Front Cover:

*Instrumentos de Amor e Morte* from the series, *Torsos* by Antonio Henrique Amaral; oil on canvas; 180 cm x 180 cm; 1995. Collection of the artist.

The following is from a statement by Maria Alice Milliet, originally included in the catalog for a 1997 exhibition of the *Torsos* series at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo:

*In 1995, the organizers of an AIDS prevention campaign commissioned a number of artists with a poster design. Antonio Henrique Amaral produced a billboard illustration that ended up originating Torsos — a new series of paintings of great formal unity and extremely subtle colors. To approach such a hot issue as sexuality, the painter adopted the most sober palette of his entire career. [The torsos] are trunks stuck to one another, silent in their mute attachment. There is sensuality, despite the [muted] color: there is skin against skin, body against body in this inexorable propagation. Male and female are implied by protuberances that were once thorns and sprouts, now only suggested by androgynous contours, thus illustrating the lack of distinction between object and subject in sexual embrace. Anonymity is enhanced by the absence of faces and any other particular anatomical features: torsos linked in a sequence of erotic exchange. There is no warning or censorship in these canvases, but the blatant fatality of coupling within an infinite multiplication of connections.*

### Back Cover:

The “Virtuti Militari” Cross is the highest Polish military award for valour. It was established in 1792. This wrought iron replica is located on the Unknown Soldier’s Tomb in Warsaw.

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#### Producers

Alex Klein & James Ginsburg

#### Engineer

Bill Maylone

#### Recorded

June 16–20, 2003 at the studios of ICN-Polyart, Prague, Czech Republic



#### Design

Melanie Germond & Pete Goldlust

#### Publishers

Martinů © 1983 Editions Max Eschig  
Sydor © 1992 Pawel B. Sydor (psydor@hotmail.com)  
Yano © 1991 Marco A. Yano

#### About the Instrument

Alex Klein plays on an F. Lorée Royal oboe made to his specifications by the Maison Lorée in Paris, and wishes to thank them for their support for this recording and for the extraordinary craftsmanship of their instruments



## TWENTIETH CENTURY OBOE CONCERTOS

Alex Klein, *oboe*

Czech National Symphony Orchestra

Paul Freeman, *conductor*

### DISC 1

#### Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959)

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*Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra*, H. 353 (1955) (15:44)\*

1. *Moderato* (4:50)
2. *Poco Andante* (6:18)
3. *Poco Allegro* (4:29)

\*Daniela Kosinova, *piano*

#### Pawel Sydor (b. 1970)

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4. *Virtuti Militari (Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra)* (1992) (27:50)

### DISC 2

#### Marco Aurélio Yano (1963–1991)

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*Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (1991) (37:44)\*

1. *(In Memoriam)* (10:01)
2. *Seresta* (11:58)
3. *Frevo* (15:32)

\*Michael Keefe, *synthesizer*

Total Time (both discs): (81:27)

## **Bohuslav Martinů: *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra* (1955)**

notes by Andrea Lamoreaux

During the last decade of the 19th century in the ancient Bohemian town of Polička, rooms at the top of the church tower served as home for the family of a man employed as the town shoemaker, bell-ringer, and fire warden. His son, a sensitive, artistically inclined boy, later expressed in music the sense of space he gained from the views afforded by that tower's windows.

This was Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959), one of the outstanding Czech composers of the modern era. Extraordinarily prolific in all fields of musical endeavor, from opera to sonatina, he wrote in a basically tonal, neo-Classical style that is distinctively his own, showing similarities to the work of composers who influenced him — Stravinsky, Debussy, Roussel — but belonging in the end to no clearly defined school or trend.

Martinů's life was characterized by constant wandering and an essential physical and psychological homelessness. Despite this, he never lost interest in the musical traditions of his native Central Europe: In the last decade of his life, astonishingly productive years even in the face of serious illness, he returned nostalgically to his Bohemian roots with a set of secular can-

tatas using folk poetry and folk-inspired tunes. Contemporaneous with these cantatas are several notable works, including his opera *The Greek Passion*, his Sixth Symphony and Fifth Piano Concerto, the evocative *Frescoes of Piero della Francesca* for orchestra, numerous chamber pieces, and his 1955 Oboe Concerto.

The rootlessness and wandering began early. An unsuccessful student at the Prague Conservatory, Martinů sat out the First World War back in Policka as a teacher plagued by ill health. He returned to Prague to join the violin section of the Prague Philharmonic, with which he went on tour in 1919 and got his first glimpse of Paris. Four years later, he moved to the French capital permanently. There he studied with the eminent composer and teacher Albert Roussel, heard jazz for the first time, met Stravinsky, and — more significantly for his future career — encountered conductor Serge Koussevitzky. Koussevitzky took great interest in Martinů's first orchestral scores, which led to important American commissions later. Also in Paris, he met his wife, Charlotte Quennehen, a dressmaker who stuck with him, and to a large extent supported him, in spite of his poverty, illness, exile, and infidelities.

Although Martinů's music was extensively performed in both Paris and Prague, his personal situation became dangerous with the Nazi takeover of Central Europe and the growing threat to France. When the Third Reich marched into Paris in the spring of 1940, Martinů and his wife emigrated via Provence and Portugal to the United States. Koussevitzky, now music director of the Boston Symphony, commissioned Martinů's First Symphony and offered him a teaching post at the Tanglewood Festival. Even with these artistic advantages, Martinů was never happy in America. When World War II ended, he hoped to return to Prague. Illness, injury, and the Communist government of Czechoslovakia militated against this plan, however. Martinů ended up staying on this side of the Atlantic until 1953, when he and Charlotte at last returned to Paris, dividing the next six years between France and Switzerland. Outside of a few visits to Prague and Policka during the 1920s and '30s, Martinů had been away from his homeland for 35 years when he died in Switzerland in 1959. His body was reinterred in his home village 20 years later.

"On his own admission, Martinů's boyhood in the tower affected him in later life," wrote his biographer Jan Smaczny:

*The isolation may well have contributed to the elusive quality of his personality, and a tendency to disori-*

*entation when first encountering new places. This disorientation and the narrow provincialism of his background undoubtedly compounded his inability to handle the academic side of life in Prague; on the other hand, he soon adapted to metropolitan cultural life in both Prague and Paris. The monolithic architecture and hectic pace of New York proved far less congenial and resulted in bouts of depression increased by worries about his home, first under the Nazis and then under the Communists. He could sometimes appear withdrawn and abstracted in later years. His relationship with Charlotte, despite her loyalty at crucial stages, was fragmented by his infidelity, but although they were not soul mates, Martinů retained a sentimental affection for her, and they remained man and wife until his death. Compulsive aspects of his personality surfaced in his chain-smoking, voracious reading, and a frequently workaholic approach to composition. As a teacher he was mercurial and unmethodical, but although his manner with students reflected his own lack of ease with academic discipline, his ability to maximize the potential he saw in embryonic work was highly valued.*

From *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Second Edition, vol. 15, Stanley Sadie, ed., p. 941. (New York: Macmillan Publishers, Ltd.: 2001)

Martinů wrote his only Oboe Concerto in 1955 on a commission from his fellow Czech émigré, Jiri Tancibudek, who had relocated to Australia. Short, expressive, and quite virtuosic, the three-movement work could not be more tonally inspired: its first movement is firmly rooted in the key of B-flat major. An interesting element that colors the entire work is the prominent presence of a piano in the small orchestra. Martinů often included piano in his orchestrations — it's a particular characteristic of his symphonic music — but its central role in this piece comes as something of a surprise, making it seem almost a second solo instrument.

The Moderato opening movement has the orchestra introducing a lively theme with a signature motif: two or three rapid notes followed by a sustained one. The oboe introduces a more cantabile melody that is soon elaborated with fast-moving scale and chromatic passages that explore the whole range of the instrument. Throughout this movement, Martinů employs the full ensemble of flutes, clarinets, bassoon, horns, trumpet, strings, and piano.

The upbeat “tutti” ending of the Moderato takes us to the lyrical, contemplative “Poco Andante” second movement with its wealth of sinuous, slowly shifting harmonies. The instrumentation is reduced here: just soloist, strings, piano, and a couple of striking interjections from the

first horn. There's a long oboe passage labeled “recitative,” a term borrowed from opera indicating a lightly accompanied, free-form solo for one of the leading singers. Martinů's meditative oboe recitative is accompanied only by the piano, effectively turning the middle of the Andante into an accompanied cadenza.

A few bars of insistent rhythmic patterns from the piano flow into the upbeat full orchestra “tutti” that opens the “Poco Allegro” finale. The soloist joins in, picking up on the orchestra's rapid figurations and adding a few of his own. Once again, the rhythmic motif of rapid notes followed by a sustained tone is heard, now much varied and elaborated. Leading up to the highly charged recapitulation and finale is the oboist's only solo cadenza, a chromatic and richly ornamented tour de force that displays the instrument to its full advantage. The full-orchestra coda is almost perpetual motion in its rhythmic intensity, resolving and reuniting the movement's themes before concluding on a solid cadence in D major.

(Martinů originally composed two cadenzas for the finale. The score allows the option of including either or both. Mr. Klein plays the first one.)

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*Andrea Lamoreaux is music director of WFMT-FM, Chicago's classical-music station.*

## **Pawel Sydor: *Virtuti Militari (Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra) (1992)***

notes by Pawel Sydor

I wrote *Virtuti Militari (Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra)* during 1991–92. The work commemorates the bicentennial anniversary of the *Virtuti Militari*, the highest Polish military order. King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowsky, the last of the Polish monarchs, established the order in 1792 to recognize the most distinguished gallantry in battle. The *Virtuti Militari* is awarded to soldiers, civilians, and even cities.

I wrote the concerto for Alex Klein and with him very much in mind. I met Alex at the Oberlin Conservatory, where he was teaching oboe while I was a composition student. I was so impressed by his playing that I asked if I could write something for him. Alex first asked me to write cadenzas for Mozart's Oboe Concerto. After I did, he said: “Why don't you write an oboe concerto?” I followed his suggestion, completing the work about a year later.

The concerto is in one movement, with five distinguishable parts. It follows an ABCB'A' form, concluding with a Largo lacrimoso that functions as a coda. Three predominant pitches heard throughout the piece — B, C, D — create a feeling of a key center at times. They appear at important moments within the piece, including in the very energetic first theme (sections A & A') as well as at the concerto's conclusion. The

work explores the whole range of the oboe's technical and musical possibilities.

*Virtuti Militari* is not a conventional programmatic work, but it tells a story nonetheless. It is about a people's struggle for freedom in modern Poland, including the freedoms of speech and religion, and the right to reclaim their own tradition. There are three characters: 1) The Oboe — a single individual, an unnoticed hero, a common man fighting to save the last ideals from being dishonored; 2) The Maggots — a small group of people who rule the world, people thirsty for power who are opposed to the oboe; and 3) The Crowd — the majority of people, lacking autonomy, behaving and reacting like flags in the wind, changing directions constantly. The Maggots appear at the beginning of the concerto as semi-tone motives in the lower strings and brasses. As the piece progresses, these semi-tone motives grow into a powerful fugue subject (section C). The Crowd, represented by the full orchestra, is between the Oboe and the Maggots. Most of the time it follows the Maggots out of fear. The Oboe constantly tries to convince the Crowd to follow him, to stand up for truth . . . to fight (first theme, sections A & A'). Its longing for a “better world” is expressed in the very lyrical, calm, and innocent second theme (sections B & B').

When the Oboe finally succeeds in convincing the Crowd, his triumph is short-lived. Towards the end he is killed by the forces of the Maggots and the Crowd joined together. While dying, the Oboe sings the *Lacrimosa* and ascends to heaven. Having betrayed the hero, the orchestra descends to the netherworld below.

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*The winner of many prestigious composition awards and competitions, **Pawel B. Sydor** was born in Bialystok, Poland, in 1970. After his early studies in Poland, Sydor enrolled at the Oberlin Conservatory, where he studied composition with Edward Miller and Richard Hoffman, and conducting with Robert Ponto and Robert Spano. Sydor went on to the master's program at Juilliard, under the tutelage of John Corigliano. In 1994, Sydor was a winner in the Juilliard School Composers' Competition for his *Virtuti Militari* — Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, which was premiered by oboist Humbert Lucarelli and the Juilliard Symphony in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall. *Virtuti Militari* also won Sydor the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Charles Ives Scholarship in composition in 1995.*

*Sydor has composed over 40 works spanning virtually all genres of classical music. His music has been performed in the United States, Poland, Czech Republic, and Ukraine, including in Weill Recital Hall*

*at Carnegie Hall and at such international festivals as the Warsaw Autumn, Gaude Mater (Poland), Kontrasty (Ukraine), and Florida International University Music Festival in Miami.*

*Sydor also writes electronic music and has composed scores for films including Josh Colover's "Old Salt," which won the Gold Medal at The Charleston Film Festival in 1996 and the Wasserman Film Award in 1997; Richard Haberkern's "Real People, Real Sharks;" and Sam Ung's full feature film "Destiny." In 2001, KOCH Classics released *Lamento*, Sydor's highly personal piece for cello and piano, written in memory of the victims of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks (Koch Classics Edition Polonia CD 52317-2, LC5680).*

*Pawel Sydor is a member of the Polish Composers' Union and ASCAP.*

## **Marco Aurélio Yano: *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (1991)**

notes by Alex Klein

*Brazilian composer Marco Aurélio Yano wrote his *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* in 1991, on commission by Alex Klein, to whom he dedicated the piece. The concerto is set in three movements: (In Memoriam), Seresta, and Frevo.*

Marco Aurélio Yano was born in 1963 in São Paulo, Brazil, from a family of Japanese descent. Severely handicapped from birth, Yano was quadriplegic and endured a number of difficulties related to his condition. In spite of his physical limitations, Marco studied hard and finished his university studies with a major in conducting and composition from the State University of São Paulo (UNESP). It was at UNESP's Planalto Arts Institute that I met him, and immediately became acquainted with his extraordinary talent as a musician and composer.

In 1988, I asked him to write an oboe concerto. The commission had numerous specific requirements. It was to be a large scale work, preferably at least 30 minutes in length. It was to be scored for a large orchestra in a slightly "concertante" style, giving the orchestra a major share of the thematic materials and their development. The concerto was to contain musical and cultural traits of the composer's birth culture, in this case Brazil, clearly reflected in its motives, themes, harmony, and rhythms. The work would also have to develop the capabilities of the oboe in every direction

possible, not only technical, improvisatory, and in the so-called "20th Century Techniques," but also be mindful that the oboe is, in its essence, a lyrical instrument capable of great musical and colorful feats. Regarding the technical requirements of the work, I requested that Marco push the known limits of oboe technique so as to provide players with a much needed evolution of the instrument's capabilities.

Yano finished the manuscript for all three movements in 1991, and began working on the orchestration for the second movement. Fate prevented him from completing his work, however, as Yano acquired the brain tumors that eventually took his life. He was only 27. The finished manuscript with an unfinished orchestration was then passed on to his composition teacher and mentor at the time, Edmundo Villani Cortes, who began the process of orchestrating the work according to Yano's specifications. Eventually the score and manuscript came to my attention for further work on orchestration and preparation for performances and this recording.

The work is written for a full symphony orchestra, with a few curious additions. Special notice should be given to the presence of a synthesizer. Yano wrote many pieces of electronic music; the synthesizer

awarded him the flexibility to work in a multi-color musical environment with much ease. The manuscript made little mention of the percussion instruments to be used and entire lines were often left blank, even where the composer's notes call for an important part to be played by a specific instrument. Thus, in order to fulfill Yano's wishes as indicated in the manuscript, I had to fill in some gaps with material found elsewhere in the piece. The solo oboe part also underwent a significant revision. Originally, Yano and I were set to meet after the completion of the work to make sure the oboe writing was appropriate for the instrument, its projection over the orchestra, and its technical capability. For obvious and unfortunate reasons, this meeting never took place. I made several adjustments to the oboe part in order to make it completely playable, while at all times striving to maintain Yano's musical intentions.

The concerto's second and third movements clearly follow the Brazilian influence I requested. The *Seresta* is a traditional nostalgic song in Brazil, simple in effect yet profound in its meaning. The way the initial solo cadenza at the beginning of the *Seresta* is notated in the manuscript suggests Yano added it later, perhaps only after he completed the rest of the piece. This opening solo provides a bridge between the sad events at the conclusion of the first movement (see below) and the onset of the

*Seresta*-like mood when the orchestra eventually joins the oboe. The harmony of this *Seresta* is obviously and richly based on the traditional and popular music of Brazil. Yet the almost Wagnerian length of its phrases creates a much deeper feeling which runs throughout the movement.

The *Frevo* is an Afro-Brazilian dance common in Brazil's northeastern states. The *Frevo* is normally written in 4/4 time with a strongly weighted beat at the end of each measure (not unlike its cousin, the *Baião*). For this work, Yano chose to give a slightly displaced 7/8 rhythm, an off-beat feeling emphasized by the apparently "lost" double basses at the beginning of the movement, trying desperately to find the original 4/4 feeling, but eventually settling into 7/8 with the rest of the strings. The *Frevo* is temporarily interrupted by a lovely interlude, opened by a distant sounding horn solo, followed by the oboe and strings. Upon its return, the *Frevo* mood now takes the soloist through Paganiniesque variations eventually leading to a coda, a cadenza, and a final orchestral statement in which the middle section theme makes a triumphant return.

While the last two movements clearly indicate a Brazilian heritage, the first movement speaks in a completely different idiom. Yano left no instructions as to its meaning; he had no time for that. He barely finished the manuscript before he could

no longer hold a pencil to finish his work. Close scrutiny of its motives as well as the circumstances of its writing suggest an intended programme. The movement follows a pattern closely related to the composer's own life, development, crisis, and untimely death. The main motive, which is repeated countless times throughout the movement (and also appears in the other movements) is the composer's name as it is pronounced in Portuguese:



The mood of the movement is of intense difficulty, insurmountable problems, and constant struggle. This struggle changes form when, at the middle of the movement, a dramatic event in the orchestra brings us back to the opening motives, followed by ever faster motives, suggesting someone enduring great stress. Suddenly, all is changed again by the oboe holding a straight high note, while the orchestra gradually dies away.

Considering the composer's lifelong struggle with his handicap and his battle with brain cancer, one can only assume the movement reflects his personal story, from birth to development to schooling to diagnoses to symptoms and finally to death. Details such

as the intense headaches he suffered, as well as nausea and fear seem obvious, as is the voice of his grandfather calling his name, played by the tuba and double basses in the slow middle section — a recollection Yano reported to his mother after a dream in which his deceased grandfather spoke to him about his symptoms and prognosis. The 45-second held high note in the oboe at the end of the movement denotes a flat line on an electrocardiogram, underneath which the orchestra plays a previously unheard theme consisting of two notes, B-flat and A-flat. This two-note motive, coming at the moment of his death, may signify his parental nickname, *Quinho* (pronounced Kiño), being called three times, ever softer, as his life vanishes.

It is dangerous to assign a programme to a work when there is no instruction from the composer. One always runs the risk of making a wrong guess and attaching an erroneous message to the composer's work. Nonetheless, my ability to compare my experience as a friend and colleague of the composer with the music he wrote, combined with the comments I collected from his family, compels me to present the version of events I have put forward here. Yano left no descriptive marking for the first movement. I took the liberty of naming it "(In Memoriam)" (in parentheses) because I believe Yano gave us this movement as his personal farewell.



## About Alex Klein

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Alex Klein began his musical studies in his native Brazil at the age of nine, and made his solo orchestral debut the following year. At the age of eleven, he was invited to join the Camerata Antiqua, one of Brazil's foremost chamber ensembles. During his teenage years, he toured and performed as a soloist, recitalist, and as a member of several professional orchestras in Brazil. He then studied at the Oberlin Conservatory with James Caldwell, earning two degrees in music performance.

After a year at Oberlin, Mr. Klein won first prize in the first Lucarelli International Competition for Solo Oboe Players, held at New York's Carnegie Hall. He has received many awards worldwide, including at the 1988 International Competition for Musical Performers in Geneva, Switzerland, in which he was the first oboist to be awarded first prize since Heinz Holliger, three decades earlier.

Mr. Klein joined the Chicago Symphony as principal oboe in 1995. He has performed as soloist with the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, and Chicago Sinfonietta. He has recorded for Teldec, Boston Records, Newport Classics, Musical Heritage Society, and Cedille Records.

Alex Klein won the 2002 Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Soloist with Orchestra for his recording of the Richard Strauss Oboe Concerto with Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony. Klein left the Chicago Symphony in July 2004 due to the onset of Musician's Focal Dystonia. He currently performs as a soloist and conductor, and also teaches.

## Also with Alex Klein, Paul Freeman, and the CNSO

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— Seattle Times

## About Paul Freeman

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One of America's leading conductors, Maestro Paul Freeman became the Founding Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta in 1987. He was appointed Music Director and chief conductor of the Czech National Symphony Orchestra in Prague in January 1996. From 1979 to 1989, Maestro Freeman served as Music Director of the Victoria Symphony in Canada. Prior to that post, he served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic and as Associate Conductor of the Dallas and Detroit Symphonies. He also served for six years as Music Director of the Opera Theatre of Rochester, New York.

Maestro Freeman has conducted over 100 orchestras in 28 countries, including the National Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, London Philharmonic, Royal

Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Moscow Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Berlin Symphony, Tonkünstler Orchester (Vienna), National Orchestra of Mexico, and Israel Sinfonietta.

Dr. Freeman received his Ph.D. from the Eastman School of Music and studied on a U.S. Fulbright Grant at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. He also studied with the renowned conductor Pierre Monteux and has received numerous awards including a top prize in the Mitropoulos International Conducting Competition, and, most recently, the Mahler Award from the European Union of Arts. With over 200 recordings to his credit, Maestro Freeman has won widespread acclaim for his interpretations of classical, romantic, and modern repertoire. Recently, he was awarded Doctor of Humane Letters degrees from both Dominican and Loyola Universities in Chicago. This is Dr. Freeman's eleventh recording for Cedille.

## About The Czech National Symphony Orchestra (CNSO)

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Founded in the early 1990s by Jan Hasenöhrl and a small group of dedicated musicians, the Czech National Symphony Orchestra (under the corporate umbrella of ICN-Polyart) has established itself as one of the premiere orchestras of the Czech Republic. Its first Music Director was Zdeněk Košler, a leading Czech conductor and former Music Director of the Czech Philharmonic.

Since Maestro Paul Freeman was appointed chief conductor of the Czech National Symphony Orchestra (CNSO) in January 1996, the musical body has continued to develop under his leadership. He has already recorded 20 CDs with the orchestra and arranged a 1997 UK Tour during which Maestro Freeman shared the podium with the distinguished Czech conductor Libor Pešek. Recently, the CNSO entered into a five-year agreement with IMG Artists Management to tour extensively in Europe, Asia, and North and South America. The CNSO has also collaborated with the conductor Gaetano Delogu, with whom it appeared at the Messino Festival in September 2000. In addition to these activities, there are also several film music projects under way with the Rome agency AMIT, giving the CNSO an opportunity to work with such film composers as Ennio Morricone, F. Piersanti, and others. This is the orchestra's seventh recording with Paul Freeman for Cedille Records.





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