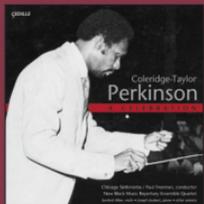


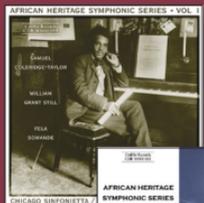
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DELIGHTS & DANCES



Works for String Quartet and Orchestra
Including *West Side Story Concerto*

HARLEM QUARTET
CHICAGO SINFONIETTA
MEI-ANN CHEN

CEDILLE

Producer James Ginsburg

Engineer Bill Maylone

Recorded June 19–20, 2012 in Wentz Concert Hall at North Central College, Naperville, Illinois

Cover Harem Dancers (the Jack Cole Group) performing at the Harem Nightclub in New York City, January 1, 1947 (Photo by Gjon Mili//Time Life Pictures/Getty Images)

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DELIGHTS & DANCES

HARLEM QUARTET
CHICAGO SINFONIETTA
MEI-ANN CHEN

1 MICHAEL ABELS

*Delights & Dances for String Quartet and String Orchestra (13:03)**

BENJAMIN LEES

Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra (20:49)

2 I. Allegro con brio (7:42)

3 II. Andante cantando (7:32)

4 III. Allegro energico (5:28)

5 AN-LUN HUANG "Saibei Dance" from *Saibei Suite No. 2 (4:08)*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN arr. RANDALL CRAIG FLEISCHER

*West Side Story Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra (25:47)**

6 Mambo (2:06)

7 Cha Cha (2:02)

8 Maria (2:32)

9 Tonight (3:17)

10 Cadenza (4:44)

11 Prologue (2:42)

12 America (2:56)

13 Quintet (3:18)

14 Cadenza 2 (0:59)

15 Finale (1:07)

TT: (64:10)

*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

HARLEM QUARTET

Ilmar Gavilán, violin • Melissa White, violin • Juan-Miguel Hernandez, viola • Paul Wiancko, cello

DELIGHTS & DANCES

Notes by Andrea Lamoreaux

The incomparable PDQ Bach—better known as composer and classical music comedian Peter Schickele—once wrote a Concerto for Two Pianos vs. Orchestra. The spoof reflects on what would happen if a pair of virtuoso soloists decided to show off with no regard for what the orchestra was playing; and if the orchestra then decided to show off with no reference to what the soloists were doing. It's hilarious in performance, but it ignores the principle of concerto writing: the term comes from the Latin word "concertare," which means "to sing together."

Our image of a concerto today posits a single soloist in front of an orchestra, pouring out beautiful solo melodies. Of course, these melodies would be far less impressive without the contributions of all the supporting musicians. In the 17th

and 18th centuries, when concertos originated, they were quite different, calling for a small group of soloists trading themes with a slightly larger ensemble, about the size of a modern chamber orchestra. This genre, known as the Concerto Grosso, was practiced by Handel, Telemann, Corelli, and many of their contemporaries. Bach composed the concerti grossi most often heard today: the six Brandenburg Concertos. He was also a pioneer of the solo concerto, having borrowed and expanded on the example of Antonio Vivaldi, who wrote hundreds of concertos featuring a single soloist, although he also composed some of the concerto grosso variety.

In the 19th century, with the solo concerto firmly established as the preferred musical idiom, only a few composers carried on the concerto grosso tradition. Ludwig Spohr was one; England's Sir Edward Elgar composed his *Introduction and*

Allegro for solo string quartet and string orchestra; and in the first half of the 20th century, prolific Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů created several works of the concerto grosso variety. On this album, the Chicago Sinfonietta compiles three recent examples of this type of work, showcasing the virtuosity of the Harlem Quartet, which performed these works with the Chicago Sinfonietta under the leadership of music director Mei-Ann Chen in concert prior to their recording sessions.

Michael Abels composed his *Delights & Dances* for string quartet and string orchestra specifically for the Harlem Quartet. Born in 1962 in Phoenix, Arizona, Abels studied composition at the University of Southern California. Along with the standard curriculum, he explored his African-American roots by studying gospel music and African drumming. Abels received two Meet

the Composer (now New Music USA) grants, one allowing him to work with young musicians through the Watts Tower Arts Center in Los Angeles, the other providing a residency with the of Richmond Symphony (VA) and its youth orchestra. His works include the 1997 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. tribute *Dance for Martin's Dream* and 1991 composition *Global Warming*, which is not just a reference to climate change, but also to the thawing of international relations. Mr. Abels hoped for after the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Delights & Dances, a single-movement work, often features rapidly-paced chord patterns and 16th-note runs for the solo quartet. These are rhythmically varied by the insertion of triplet patterns, which tend to relax and slow down the pace. The introductory section commences at a measured pace, *Largo*, with the further notation, *molto rubato*, indicating rhythmic freedom. Indeed,

the opening passage for solo cello sounds almost like a cadenza. The solo viola picks up the cello's ascending seven-note motive and they combine in a short duet, joined soon by the two solo violins. When the orchestra enters, it plays pizzicato, in short, detached, syncopated patterns. This "Bluesy" first section has the smokey sound you would expect, but still manages to feel upbeat and rhythmic. The blues theme is reintroduced by the solo cello, then viola and violins, and finally as a solo for the first violin. Each instrument in the solo group gets its own riff, and for the first time we hear the orchestra playing bowed strings. The final section, "Bluegrassy," begins with the theme in the solo viola part, but soon all four soloists are engaged in a lively hoedown. Eventually, the solo quartet and the strings of the orchestra are united in a grand unison tutti for a full-throttle, upbeat conclusion.

Born Benjamin George Lisniansky in 1924, American composer **Benjamin Lees** (d. 2010) came from Russian-Jewish parents who settled in San Francisco after Lees was born in China. He served briefly in the U.S. Army during World War II. After the war, Lees studied composition at the University of Southern California, where his teachers included Halsey Stevens. His most fruitful student-teacher relationship, however, was with the iconoclastic American George Antheil. In a conversation with musical commentator and record reviewer Martin Anderson, Lees recalled, "George never considered himself a teacher *per se*. His role was one of analyst.... It was a true master-apprentice relationship." Subsequently, Lees received fellowships from the Fromm and Guggenheim foundations, which allowed him to travel and compose in Europe during the 1950s. These experiences encouraged his

individualistic approach to music without reference to any prevailing "school" of composition.

Returning to the U.S., he undertook teaching posts at the Peabody Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, Queens College and, eventually, Juilliard—continuing to compose all the while. Several works were commissioned by the Dallas Symphony: his Symphony No. 4, "Memorial Candles," a commemoration of the Nazi Holocaust, and Concerto for Brass Choir and Orchestra among them. Lees wrote a similar work for the Detroit Symphony, using a wind-solo group. His very first work in this concerto grosso vein was the Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra of 1964. This work exhibits several Lees trademarks including vigorous rhythmic activity with frequent shifts of meter. Some of the meters in the String Quartet Concerto are unusual, such as 7/8 and 5/4; these tend to make the pulse

feel unsettled and more propulsive. Another characteristic is the repeated use of semitone intervals (e.g., C to C-sharp), either as reiterated thematic or accompanimental patterns, or as dissonant chordal strikes.

The orchestral winds and trumpets open the *Allegro con brio* first movement with just such a passage of insistent semitonal chords. This is virtually a perpetual-motion movement, with little slackening of pace or lightening of texture. The solo quartet enters as a body, with a short, questioning theme. The only brief moment of relaxation comes with a cello solo, curiously marked *Calmo ma inquieto* (quiet yet restless) — the underlying tension remains even where the sound is momentarily more mellow. Orchestral tutti passages re-introduce the opening chord pattern, this time with the addition of pounding tympani. Another solo cello passage leads to a return of the opening material and an abrupt end.

Andante cantando, the marking for the second movement, means moderately paced with a singing tone. Here the atmosphere is much more relaxed and lyrical, and the solo quartet stands out more from the surrounding orchestral texture. Soft tympani strokes support a sinuous theme for the solo quartet, presented in imitation. A later passage for the solo group unfurls a melody full of semitones. An orchestral climax ensues and is succeeded by a lyrical first-violin solo. The quartet then reunites to provide a tranquil ending based on diatonic triads, punctuated by high-pitched closing comments from the flute and piccolo.

Launched by brass fanfares followed by rapid figures from the solo quartet, the *Allegro energico* finale takes us back to the perpetual motion feel of the opening. Musicologist Niall O'Loughlin describes this closing movement as a rondo, typical of Classical era concertos, where a

recurring theme is interspersed with contrasting episodes. The overwhelming impression here, though, is of themes and motives tumbled one upon another at a headlong pace, with constant emphasis on those ever-important semitones: as repeated motivic figures or percussive chords. The music sweeps the listener along on a wave of virtuosic sound culminating in a fortissimo final chord.

Mei-Ann Chen and the Chicago Sinfonietta include on this recording an audience favorite, *Saibei Dance* by **An-Lun Huang**. Born in China in 1949, a former student at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, Huang emigrated to Canada in 1980 and currently resides in Toronto. After emigrating, Huang continued his composition studies in Canada, England, and the U.S. He has forged his own blend of Eastern and Western sounds in compositions for orchestra, stage, and film. *Saibei Dance's*

Oriental-inspired opening theme is played first by a solo flute and then picked up by the full orchestra; a similar tune sounds from a clarinet and is likewise enlarged. The string section introduces a new melody, soon combined with the previous ones. Sudden dynamic contrasts, brass fanfares, and prominent percussion punctuate the melodic texture as the full orchestra carries this lively dance to its bright conclusion.

Conductor, composer, and arranger **Randall Craig Fleischer** says of his *West Side Story* Concerto: "The challenge for me in crafting this arrangement was to retain everything that is unique about the score, its sensual colors in the love duets, its edgy bite in the gang scenes, the Latin jazz flavor, and transfer all of Bernstein's unique genius from voices to string instruments." Fleischer's rich and vivid scoring echoes the original sound of Bernstein's 1950s Broadway hit, which updates the tragedy of

Romeo and Juliet by transferring the story to the streets of modern-day New York City. A motive that unifies the arrangement is the rising three-note pattern that identifies the song "Maria." It is an echo throughout, constantly reappearing amid other tunes.

The "Mambo" beginning for full orchestra, dominated by the brass, is contrasted by the gentler "Cha Cha" dance. This leads directly to the solo quartet's first presentation of "Maria," characterized by a poignant cello solo. The quartet then harmonizes on the "Tonight" duet, followed by another tutti passage before the quartet launches into the big cadenza. The orchestra returns to play music from the show's jazzy "Prelude" before introducing the popular "America" theme, which is then varied by the members of the quartet. Next comes the "Tonight" ensemble piece known as the "Quintet." This contrasts the sounds of the gang rumble with the

love song. The sharp juxtaposition of romance and violence echoes this most intense and poignant scene from the show. Fleischer concludes his arrangement with a second cadenza, which returns to "Maria" before introducing the heartbreaking "Somewhere" ("There's A Place for Us") as the basis of the work's touching "Finale."

Andrea Lamoreaux is Music Director of 98.7WFMT, Chicago's classical experience.

From Left to Right

Juan-Miguel Hernandez • Paul Wiancko
Melissa White • Ilmar Gavilán



HARLEM QUARTET

Praised for its "panache" by *The New York Times*, the Harlem Quartet is "bringing a new attitude to classical music, one that is fresh, bracing and intelligent," says *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. The quartet's mission is to advance diversity in classical music, engaging young and new audiences through the discovery and presentation of varied repertoire that includes works by minority composers.

Since its public debut in 2006 at Carnegie Hall, the New York-based ensemble has performed throughout the U.S. as well as in France, the U.K., Belgium, Panama, and Canada. In May 2012 the Quartet spent two weeks on tour in South Africa, under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, performing concerts and participating in outreach activities.

In addition to performing on

various chamber music series, the Quartet has worked with such distinguished performers as violinist Itzhak Perlman, cellist Carter Brey, clarinetist Paquito D'Rivera, and pianist Misha Dichter, with whom it made its Kennedy Center debut in February 2013. The Quartet has also collaborated with jazz legends Chick Corea and Gary Burton, whom they joined for a six-month *Hot House Tour* beginning at Tanglewood Music Festival in summer 2012 and recorded for the Concord Jazz label.

Each member of the Quartet is a seasoned solo artist, including appearances with the New York Philharmonic; Boston Pops; Cleveland Orchestra; and Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, National, New World, and Pittsburg Symphonies. As an ensemble, they perform both in chamber-music settings and with orchestra, including the world premiere of *West Side Story Concerto* with Mei-Ann Chen and the Chicago

Sinfonietta in June 2012. The Quartet reprised its performance in September 2012 with the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Randall Craig Fleischer, and in December 2012 with the Santa Fe Concert Association.

The Harlem Quartet has been featured on WNBC, CNN, the Today Show, WQXR-FM, and the News Hour with Jim Lehrer. In 2009 they performed for President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House and appeared Christmas morning on NBC's Today Show. They made their European debut in October 2009, performing at the residence of the U.S. ambassador to the U.K., and returned to Europe as guest artists and faculty members of the Musica Mundi International Festival in Belgium. In early 2011 they were featured guest artists at the Panama Jazz Festival in Panama City. In June 2012 they made their Montreal Jazz Festival debut.

Their recordings include *Take the "A" Train*, featuring the string quartet version of the Billy Strayhorn standard (*White Pine*, 2007); Walter Piston *String Quartets Nos. 1, 3 & 5* (Naxos, 2010); and *Eternal Evolution* (Navona, 2011), a collaboration with pianist Awadagin Pratt showcasing works by American composer Judith Lang Zaimont.

The Harlem Quartet was founded in 2006 by The Sphinx Organization, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to building diversity in classical music and providing access to music education in underserved communities. The Quartet is managed by Sciolino Artist Management in New York City.

For more information
visit harlemquartet.com

MEI-ANN CHEN

One of the most dynamic young conductors in America, Mei-Ann Chen recently concluded her first season as Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta. Appointed in August 2010 as Music Director Designate, she led the Sinfonietta in a concert attended by over 7,000 people in Millennium Park in August of 2011 to introduce her to the people of Chicago, followed by four highly praised subscription season concerts. Her debut season was marked by two awards from the League of American Orchestras, her Helen M. Thompson Award for an emerging music director, and the Sinfonietta's First Place ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. Also Music Director of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Ms. Chen's charismatic podium style, musicality, and personal warmth have helped fuel her meteoric rise to the top ranks of conductors in the U.S.

In great demand as a guest conductor, Ms. Chen has appeared with the Alabama, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Edmonton, Fort Worth, Naples, Nashville, National, Oregon, Pacific, Pasadena, Phoenix, Sarasota, Seattle, and Toronto Symphonies. Worldwide engagements include all the principal Danish orchestras; BBC Scottish, Bournemouth, Graz, and Trondheim Symphonies; Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Tampere Philharmonic, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, National Symphony of Mexico, and the Netherlands Philharmonic at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw.

The first woman to win the Malko Competition (2005), Ms. Chen has served as Assistant Conductor of the Oregon, Atlanta, and Baltimore Symphonies. The positions in Atlanta and Baltimore were sponsored by the League of American Orchestras. Recipient of the 2007 Taki Concordia Fellowship, she has appeared

jointly with Marin Alsop and Stefan Sanderling in highly acclaimed subscription concerts with the Baltimore and Colorado Symphonies and the Florida Orchestra.

Born in Taiwan, Mei-Ann Chen has lived in the United States since 1989. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the University of Michigan, where she was a student of Kenneth Kiesler. Before that, she was the first student in the New England Conservatory's history to receive master's degrees simultaneously in violin and conducting. Ms. Chen also participated in the National Conducting Institute in Washington, D.C. and the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen.

CHICAGO SINFONIETTA

For over 25 seasons, the Chicago Sinfonietta has enriched the cultural, educational, and social quality of life in Chicago while gaining recognition on the national and international stage. Under the guidance first of Founding Music Director Paul Freeman, and now of Mei-Ann Chen, the orchestra performs at the highest artistic level and has achieved an outstanding

reputation for its innovative programs. The Sinfonietta is dedicated to the authentic performance of Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary repertoire and excels at presenting imaginative new works by composers and soloists of color.

The Sinfonietta has toured successfully in the U.S. and Europe including concerts in Germany, Austria, the Canary Islands, and at the Kennedy



Center, and mounted equally successful seasons at home. Artists presented during the orchestra's first decade included the Vienna Boys Choir, Ben Vereen, and Marian McPartland, among many others. Subsequent collaborations have taken place with an incredible cross-section of artists including Poi Dog Pondering, the Congo Square Theater Company, Howard Levy, Rachel Barton Pine, Orbert Davis, R. Carlos Nakai, and the Apostolic Church of God Choir, to name just a few.

To help develop tomorrow's musicians and audience members, the Chicago Sinfonietta has created several innovative outreach programs. In collaboration with the Chicago Public Schools, *Audience Matters* provides in-depth music programming and subsidized concert tickets for students in underserved areas of Chicago. Student Ensembles with Excellence and Diversity (SEED) provides mentoring for young

musicians, identifying talented high school musicians and offering them a series of workshops and master classes taught by Chicago Sinfonietta teacher-musicians in small ensemble settings. Project Inclusion provides early-career diverse musicians two-year fellowships with the orchestra.

For more information visit
chicagosinfonietta.org