

Mp3 Howard Rovics - : Retrospective



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Excellent performances of original contemporary music of composer Howard Rovics including songs featuring soprano Christina Rovics, two works for flute and piano, and one for cello and piano. 19 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Contemporary Details: [From notes written by the composer Howard Rovics] This album represents a culmination of inspiring collaborations spanning three decades. For ten years (prior to the making of this CD) there has been my daily relationship with my wife Christina and her voice. She is the prime inspiration behind this CD, which contains a song cycle for soprano and large chamber ensemble; two works for voice, flute and piano; 8 songs for soprano and piano; and 3 instrumental works. All of these were written during the last 30 years. Composing is a solitary act. It takes dedicated performers to bring compositions such as these to life. In addition to Christina's efforts, there is the meaningful connection I have had with two living poets, Duane Niatum and Rivka Kashtan, herein represented. The two flute works were written for Tony Pagano in 1967, and the cello work was written for David Wells in 1982. The compositions involving chamber ensembles were performed by members of the North/South Consonance as part of their New York concert series. This group of performers include flutist Lisa Hansen and pianist Max Lifchitz, who recorded my Piano Sonata in 1995. Gratefully, I recorded with all of these artists especially for this release. A native New Yorker, Howard Rovics (b. 1936) was educated at the Manhattan School of Music where he studied piano under the tutelage of Robert Goldsand. Further training at NYU's Film School, the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, and with the legendary composer Stefan Wolpe prepared him for a professional career. A Composer, Pianist and Organ, he is a Professor Emeritus of Music at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University. He wrote 30 film scores to children's books during a five year period of commercial composing early in his career. His score to Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* won a major award from the Columbus

Film Festival for the outstanding score of the year in 1969. Rovics was one of three composers from the state of Connecticut to receive a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grant in 1974 during the Bicentennial. At that same time the famed jazz pianist Billy Taylor premiered his Transactions: a Third Stream Jazz Piece with the Aeolian Chamber Players. The following year it was also conducted by Gunther Schuller at the New England Conservatory. In 1978 Rovics received the American Composers Alliance Recording Award which resulted in an LP release on the CRI label. In 1980 his operetta Impeachment was chosen to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the C.W.Post campus which he produced and directed in a series of performances in New York City and Long Island. In 1985 the New York ensemble Continuum featured, on their 20th anniversary concert at Tully Hall Rovics' Songs for the Harvester of Dreams which he wrote for them on a grant provided by the New York State Council on the Arts. In 1992 and 1997 respectively scenes from his opera In and Out of Eden was premiered in Connecticut and his large scale cantata on the Holocaust, St. Jakob's Church in Rotenburg was premiered in Manhattan by Musica Viva of New York. While this recording was in production Rovics received a commission from the Bruce Museum of Greenwich Connecticut to write Impressoes do Brasil for the guitar duo Guitar X2. Their CD release Catgut Flambo on the Musicians Showcase label also came out 1998. Representation on various other CD's include: Piano Sonata (1982) on New Romantics (North South Recordings), Come, Swan (1994) for mixed chorus a capella, and Forces (1996) for piano solo released in 2002 and 2004 respectively on the Capstone label as part of a new music series called Spectra. Forces was composed in 1996 on a commission from the Connecticut Music Teachers Association who voted Howard Rovics their Distinguished Composer of the Year. Upon retiring from 33 years of college teaching in 2000 Rovics wrote Reflections for oboe, violin, marimba and cello for Edens Edge 20th year celebration in 2001 at the request of Maria Benotti. Howard Rovics divides his time between composing and working as a freelance organist who serves churches in Connecticut's Fairfield County. Recent compositions have been for solo organ or organ with instruments. Among these are Contemplation: 9/11 in Memoriam for organ solo, an organ sonata and currently a work for organ, strings and percussion, When Things Go Glimmering. Soprano Christina Rovics is a versatile singer highly regarded for her performances of early music, art song, cabaret and new music. She studied at The Juilliard School and Eastman School of Music. She credits the British bass Raymond Buckingham as the one teacher out of many who helped build her masterful vocal technique. He also inspired her passion for

teaching which she devotes herself to in her own studio in Bethel, Connecticut. Formerly on the faculties of Western Connecticut State University and the Connecticut Conservatory of Music and Dance, Ms. Rovics prepares talented young people for college and theatrical auditions. A talented portrait painter since childhood, the Rovics' home displays many of her paintings, one of which - a self-portrait- was selected for the cover of this recording. Her collaboration with Howard Rovics began in 1983. Notes on compositions: Written in 1982, the Songs on Chinese Poetry were inspired by Stuart H. Sargents translations of the writings of various Chinese poets which appeared in a book entitled Do You Not See. I was immediately attracted to this poetry because it contained images devoid of elaboration. Furthermore, in Sargents translations, the rhythm of the English cleverly evoked the cadence of the original Mandarin. Scored for soprano and large chamber ensemble this cycle consists of six contrasting songs. The virtuosic vocal writing demands great technical ability requiring complete control of a wide vocal range, extreme dynamics and sprechstimme effects. The angular, geometric vocal lines are mirrored and amplified in the instrumental writing. Word painting throughout the cycle strives to clarify and enhance the meaning of the poetry for the listener. The most recent compositions found in this collection were completed in 1996. Scored for voice, flute and piano, My Stage is Tied to Heaven and Tangere are based on poems penned by the Israeli-American writer Rivka Kashtan. My Stage draws on a traditional Peruvian folk tune to propel it energetically and Tangere utilized the characteristic Tango rhythm to underscore the play on words Tango-Tangere as the music reaches its climactic ending. I love Kashtans work because it is so personal, playful and passionate. Incantation for cello and piano is a highly visceral work written in 1982. It tells of my experiences as an active participant in guided Native American rituals. The music is in 8 continuously connected sections entitled Evening Gathering, Purification, Obsession, Passion, Ancestors Ceremony, Morning Farewell, Recollections and Coda. It strives to evoke the spirit of prayer and deeply felt communion. The work is meant to be heard as a one movement tone poem. Do You Not See is the first song cycle I wrote based on the same volume of ancient Chinese poems that inspired the opening work on this CD. It is for soprano and piano. Some percussion instruments are also used, including two bowl-shaped Buddhist meditation gongs played by the pianist and a wood block played by the singer. The pianist also employs various yarn and rubber mallets to play directly inside the strings of the instrument with the purpose of creating a sense of orientalism directly supporting the poetry while at the same time exploiting the pianos percussive and plectrum properties. The cycle consists of six

contrasting songs. It was written in 1978 and premiered at New York Citys Alice Tully Hall. Cybernetic Study for alto flute and piano is an abstract piece inspired by my fascination with science and technology. Fifteen years before the first personal computer hit the market Ashbeys Introduction to Cybernetics explained the value of modeling systems with inputs and outputs which could yield predictable cyclic results. I applied this to music, inventing a colorful and rhythmically asymmetrical sonic interplay. I completed the work in 1967. The Two songs for Medium Voice and Piano "' Klallam Song and All We Need"'were written in 1984, a couple of years after the completion of my two songs cycles on Chinese Poetry. I was seeking images that were more familiar to me as a resident of North America. The Native American poet Duane Niatum wrote with just that warmth and sensuousness that I sought. He is of Klallam descent, native to the Pacific Northwest. His poetry moved me to write quieter, spacious lines. I composed Serenade for Flute and Piano in 1967, shortly after I joined the staff of the Weston Woods Film Studio as music director. In its original version, the music was one of the 28 film scores I composed during the five year period I was associated with Weston Woods. After undergoing minor revisions in 1976, the music acquired a new life as a concert piece.

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