

—Making A Song And Dance—

This Compact Disc brings together on disc for the first time the music of three composers who held the post of Composer-in-Residence at The Queen's University of Belfast during the 1980s. Since its inception in 1979 to its demise in 1996, this post was responsible for drawing to Northern Ireland a range of composers from very different cultural backgrounds, for residencies ranging from one to four years. Of the seven incumbents, only one - Michael Alcorn - was born and educated in Belfast; of the other composers represented here, Piers Hellawell comes from England and Kevin Volans from South Africa.

The post of Composer-in-Residence was established as a joint venture by The Arts Council Of Northern Ireland and Queen's University. While the incumbents taught and encouraged composition in the University, they are also active in the wider community: there is a good record of service to the schools of Northern Ireland, involving education projects that have done much to widen the interest in listening to and writing new music. The composers-in-residence also did much to make their mark on the biennial SONORITIES FESTIVAL OF 20th CENTURY MUSIC, of which they were successive chairpersons. All in all, this residency became known as one of the most substantial of its kind in the United Kingdom.

—Michael Alcorn—

Making a Song and Dance...

For violin, clarinet, 'cello & piano

Perichoresis 1990

For wind quintet

Making a Song and Dance... marks the beginning of my interest in Irish music as a point of departure for my own composition and a fascination for both lyrical song-like lines and repetitive dance-like rhythms. The inspiration for the piece comes from borrowed musical material: a folksong entitled the 'Lasses of Donaghadee' by the Irish composer Hamilton Harty. Only the melody is used, and it is this which forms the basis of the pitch material in the piece. Through a process of continuous transformation the melody becomes new songs and dances which are juxtaposed, developed, repeated and

defined figure struggling after him along the beach, and when he later blows the pipe a squall howls round the Inn, as if he had 'whistled up the wind.' Further blowing produces a horrifying visitation from the figure on the beach. The title stands as yet another image of approach, a tribute to the beckoning power of wind blowing down a pipe.

"He blew tentatively and stopped suddenly, startled and yet pleased at the note he had elicited. It had a quality of infinite distance in it, and, soft as it was, he somehow felt it must be audible for miles around. It was a sound, too, that seemed to have the power (which many scents possess) of forming pictures in the brain."

(M.R. James, *Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You*)

—Piers Hellawell

—Kevin Volans—

Into Darkness

For clarinet, trumpet, violin, 'cello, percussion & piano

Conducted by Stephen Pickett

Into Darkness was composed during Volans' time as Composer-in-Residence at Queen's University, between 1986 and 1989.

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Michael Alcorn

Michael Alcorn (b. 1962) studied at the University of Ulster, and completed a PhD in composition at the University of Durham with John Casken. He was appointed Composer-in-Residence at Queen's University in 1989, and in 1990 was appointed to the post of Lecturer in Music. He is director of the Electronic and Computer Music Studios at Queen's and is particularly active as a promoter of new musical technologies. He is currently chairman of the Irish Electro-acoustic Music Association.

Michael Alcorn's compositional activities range from music for conventional instruments to works for live or taped electro-acoustic performance. His music has been performed and broadcast in the UK, Europe, North and South America, and the far East. He has received commissions from the BBC, Nash Ensemble, Singcircle, the Smith String Quartet, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, Opera Theatre Company and the Ulster Orchestra. His work has also been featured at a number of the International Computer Music Conferences and he was a featured composer at the Elektrisk Helg Festival in Malmö, Sweden in 1997. He has also been a visiting composer at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics at Stanford University, and also at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver.

Piers Hellawell

Piers Hellawell studied in England, with James Wood at Oxford University and later with Nicholas Maw. When only 24 he was appointed Composer-in-Residence at the Queen's University of Belfast, where he continues to teach. His works have been commissioned, broadcast and performed in many countries all over the world.

Recent commissions in the U.K. include those from the BBC, Evelyn Glennie (percussion), the Hilliard Ensemble and the London Symphony Orchestra. Volume 1 of The Hilliard Songbook is performed around the world by the Hilliard Ensemble, who released it on a CD of that name in the ECM New Series in Autumn 1996. In 1997 Hellawell's Memorial Cairns was heard also at the Helsinki Biennale and across Australia, where it was toured by the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Kevin Volans

Kevin Volans was born in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. From 1973 to 1981 he lived in Köln, where he studied with Stockhausen and Kagel, later becoming Stockhausen's teaching assistant. He is now an Irish citizen and lives in Dublin.

finally superimposed. The original folk melody, characterized by its intervals of 4ths and 5ths, is hinted at throughout the work and finally comes into focus during the closing bars.

Making a Song and Dance... was commissioned for the 1989 Sonorities Festival for Sequenza. Two ideas were important in my mind from the early stages of writing *Perichoresis*. First was to create an imaginary ballet with musical ideas suggesting movement, dance and drama; second was to destabilize the wind quintet by featuring one of the instruments as a principal voice. This role is taken by the oboist, whose function is to initiate, develop and disseminate musical material to the remaining instruments. Throughout the work the position of the oboe is constantly challenged, and gradually its untethered musical lines become constrained and integrated into the ensemble.

Much of the inspiration for the work is drawn from the title, a chance discovery, which helped forge many of the musical ideas. *Perichoresis* means going around, rotating, transferring to, to come to in succession. Other Greek words which are linked to the work are choreutes: to dance, chori: to tear asunder, wrench apart, and, with regard to the role of the oboe within the quintet, choragus: the name of the leader of the chorus in Greek drama.

Perichoresis was commissioned by the Belfast Music Society to celebrate their 70th season, with funds provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

—Michael Alcorn

—Piers Hellawell—

Truth Or Consequences
For clarinet, 'cello & piano

Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You
For flutes & 'cello

The premiere in May 1997 of *Do Not Disturb*, a commission from the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Colin Davis at London's Barbican Hall, is followed by a concerto for Michala Petri (recorder) and Evelyn Glennie (percussion) with the Northern Sinfonia, to be premiered in the UK in Autumn 1997.

Truth Or Consequences is the name of a town in New Mexico. When I first heard of it I was attracted by the philosophical opposites embodied in the name: in musical terms it seemed to refer for me to two formal principles with which I am currently preoccupied. Both of these are 'block forms,' but one presents a juxtaposition of irreconcilable forces ('Truth') - opposites that alternate in mutual interruption - while the other is a succession of musical moods that evolve, each into the next - a narrative journey not unlike the game of Consequences.

Such worthy and high-minded thoughts were rudely challenged by the discovery that the town of Truth Or Consequences got its name when it accepted a financial offer, from a TV game show of that name, to any U.S. town that would alter its name as a publicity stunt for the show. This abrupt return to mundane matters made for me a suitably ludicrous contrast with the abstract ideas around which the piece is designed . . .

Truth Or Consequences was commissioned by the Association of Business Sponsorship for the Arts, with funds from British Telecom, for their 1991 Awards Ceremony, and was first performed by SEQUENZA.

Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You was commissioned by the American ensemble COLLABORATIONS for their Fall 1988 season in Washington DC. It is subtitled 'a long-distance collaboration,' not only a reference to the ensemble and to the trans-Atlantic cooperation involved but to the work's dramatic material, a study of spatial separation between two players. There are three positions on stage for the instrumentalists: at opposite points of the stage, at intermediate points and together in the middle. Through the opening section the two performers are gradually attracted, musically as well as geographically - for the inchoate whispers of the opening gradually grow toward a single identity as the two move toward one another. The musical product of this fusion process is a fast middle section in which the two voices are intricately entwined, while continuing the exploration of various timbres. There follow slow arias for 'cello, and then alto flute, as the players drift apart toward their original separation. Once there they explore the effect of the intricate texture when played at a remove.

The work's title comes from a ghost story by M.R. James, now remembered chiefly for his excellent 'Ghost Stories of an Antiquary.' A cynical professor on holiday in an out-of-season resort finds a tin pipe on the beach, 'Quis Iste Qui Venit?' inscribed on it in Latin. He sees in the gathering dusk an ill-

In Germany during the mid-70's, his work became known as part of the New Simplicity movement. Later, following several field recording trips to Africa, he embarked on a series of pieces based on African compositional techniques which quickly established Volans as a distinctive voice on the European new music circuit. Since the mid-80's, his work has been extensively performed worldwide, particularly in association with dance. Twelve CDs which feature his music are currently available.

In 1986 Kevin Volans began a productive collaboration with the Kronos Quartet. Their performances of *White Man Sleeps* for string quartet (1986), *Hunting:Gathering* (1987) and *The Songlines* (1988) - all written for Kronos - brought his work to a very wide audience.

—SEQUENZA—

Elizabeth Bennett	flute
Christopher Blake	oboe
Paul Schumann	clarinet
Stephen Pickett	bassoon
Jane Moore	horn
Hugh Carslaw	trumpet
Fionnuala Hunt	violin
John O'Kane	cello
Malcolm Neale	percussion
Francis King	piano

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Making a Song and Dance

Making a Song and Dance... 11:28

Michael Alcorn

Truth Or Consequences

Piers Hellawell

Mvt. 1 8:28

Mvt. 2 8:19

Perichoresis 1990

12:45

Michael Alcorn

Oh Whistle And I'll Come To You

12:47

Piers Hellawell

Into Darkness

Kevin Volans

Mvt. 1 7:20

Mvt. 2 5:17

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