

## American Music from the Moscow Autumn Festival

Pianist **Elena Ivanina** brings together in these recordings five outstanding works by present-day American composers as performed in Russia at the 1995 Moscow Autumn Festival of contemporary music and recorded immediately afterward in the New Sound Studio of the Mosfilm cinema complex.

Iowa-born **Marilyn Bliss**, an active flutist as well as composer, has written many widely-performed orchestral, chamber and solo works. Educated at Coe College and the University of Pennsylvania, she counts among her teachers such distinguished composers as George Crumb, George Rochberg and Jacob Druckman. Her many awards include the Charles Ives Prize of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, an ASCAP Young Composers Award, fellowships from Tanglewood, the Composers Conference and the New York Foundation for the Arts as well as commissions from numerous musical associations, chamber ensembles and performing artists.

*Fantasies*, for solo piano, was written in 1977. The composer herself offers this description of the work's three contrasting movements: "the metrically free opening movement—*Impromptu*—is filled with starbursts and virtuosic cadenzas. The second movement—*Nocturne*—is a night piece, and beneath its quiet, gentle mood lie hints of strangeness. The last movement—*Capriccio*—pits three very different materials against each other—rapid runs, thickly textured chords and short, quirky motif, all competing for territory and dominance. Throughout the work, the piano sostenuto pedal plays a crucial dramatic role, giving the work an almost orchestral quality."

**Hayg Boyadjian** was born in Paris, where he spent his earliest years. With his parents, he subsequently emigrated to Argentina and eventually, in 1958, to the United States. His musical education began in Argentina and continued in Boston, first at the New England Conservatory and later at Brandeis University. Boyadjian's many compositions, mostly chamber works, have been widely performed throughout the world and several have been recorded on the Opus One, Living Artists and Society of Composers record labels.

*Evocations* consists of six short pieces for solo piano, each of them offering the dream-like "evocation" of a certain mood or ambiance, which range from the dramatic to the nostalgic, the heroic, the macabre (almost in the form of a waltz), the elusive and the melancholic. Harmonies are kept to a bare minimum, in an effort to convey the dream-like quality of each piece. The six movements are marked: *Dramatico*, *Lamentoso*, *Vivace*, *Giacoso macabre*, *Largo maestoso* and *Largo*.

A native of New York City, **Joel Feigin** holds academic degrees from Columbia University and The Juilliard School where he was a student of Roger Sessions. His training has also included study with Nadia Boulanger in Fontainebleau, and on fellowships to Cornell University and the Tanglewood Music Center, where he received the Dimitri Mitropoulos Prize in Composition. Feigin's numerous other awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, which resulted in the composition and production of his opera, *Mysteries of Eleusis*, and a Fulbright Fellowship to Russia. He is currently Associate Professor of Composition on the music faculty of the University of California, Santa Barbara. *Nexus*, for flute and piano, was written in 1993 on commission from flutist Jerrold Meinwald. Intended as an "homage to Bach," it begins with a contrapuntally conceived *Prelude* in perpetual motion, "built out," according to the composer, "of a simple descending suspension series as an attempt to create "out of airy nothing" a light and graceful music." The succeeding *Adagio* features a rhapsodic non-metric introduction and an interlude for piano alone. The final *Gigue* is "derived from the suspension series of the Prelude. Like most of Bach's giges, it is binary, the second part beginning with an inversion of the subject and coming to a cheerful cadence in D major."

**Binnette Lipper's** instrumental and vocal music, ranging from solo and chamber works to full orchestra scores, has been widely performed throughout the United States and heard as well in Canada, Russia, Bulgaria and Armenia. A teacher for many years of composition and piano, she has been the recipient of numerous grants and commissions and has served repeatedly as a judge at the Music Teachers National Association Composition Competition and the Aaron Copland Competition for Young Composers. Regarding *Three for Five*, Binnette Lipper notes that she is "intrigued by the sounds of woodwinds and often find my inspiration in these sounds, both individually and in combination with one another. In *Three for Five*, I have added to the flute-oboe-bassoon trio the rhythmic support and counterpoint of a variety of definite-pitched and non-definite-pitched percussion instruments and my own primary instrument, the piano. The title of the piece comes from the three movements played by five players and suggests a light mood which is the core of the work."

Born in Wisconsin, **Chester Biscardi** received graduate degrees in Italian literature and musical composition from the University of Wisconsin and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Yale University. He has also been the recipient of the Prix de Rome, a Japan Foundation Fellowship, a Charles Ives Scholarship and a Guggenheim Fellowship, as well as grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Biscardi's music has been performed by numerous ensembles throughout the world, including the American Composers Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, the Gothia Percussion Ensemble of Sweden and the Orchestra of Italian Radio and Television, and has been featured at festivals in the United States, Holland, Great Britain, Italy and Brazil. Currently, Biscardi holds the William Schuman Chair in Music at Sarah Lawrence College, where he serves as chairman of the music department. *Piano Sonata* was written in 1986 for Anthony de Mare, who

played it for the first time at his debut recital in New York City the same year, and was revised in 1987. The work reflects Biscardi's interest in ways literature and painting influence musical ideas and forms - "how literary images or use of color can inspire everything from the smallest melodic shape to a work's overall structure."

*Piano Sonata* is specifically based on the artist Jasper Johns' Voice 2 and reflects the latter's transformation from an oil and collage triptych to a three-panel lithograph and, in its final version, to a nine-panel interchangeable series derived from the lithograph. Biscardi's composition consists of three sections, reflecting, in the composer's words, "three musical textures: angular and pulsating; fast runs and chords; and lyrical. As with Johns' series, the three sections of *Piano Sonata* evolve into nine interacting sections and a coda."

The Moscow Autumn Festival of contemporary music has played an important role in Moscow's musical life each year since the early 1960s. Stretching over the greater part of November, it offers listeners as many as three concerts each day in Moscow's principal concert halls. Sponsored by the Moscow Union of Composers, the festival leans heavily toward music written by members of that organization and toward Moscow-based players. But some room has always been made for composers and performers from other parts of Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union. In recent years, Moscow Autumn has also made increasing efforts to attract both music and musicians from Europe, Asia and America. The present recording offers the results of one such effort.

***Elena Ivanina*** was born in the Soviet Union and made her debut at the age of nine in Odessa. At the age of 14 she was sent to Moscow for further musical studies and in 1977 graduated with honors from Moscow State Conservatory. As a member of the Moscow Concert Organization, she toured throughout the Soviet Union as both piano soloist and chamber musician.

Since 1980, Ms. Ivanina has lived in the United States, where she has continued her career as a piano soloist, chamber musician and vocal coach. Her playing has been widely heard throughout the United States, including appearances as guest artist at the Ravinia Festival and the Valhalla Wagnerfest. She has appeared as well in Canada, Austria, The Netherlands, Russia, Australia and New Zealand. In New York City, Ms. Ivanina has played in Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall and other major concert venues. She has also been a frequent guest on radio station WQXR, performed in the off-Broadway production "*Black Sea Follies*" and recorded for National Public Radio.

Following a successful concert return to Moscow in May, 1995 under the sponsorship of New York Women Composers, Ms. Ivanina was invited to play at the Moscow Autumn Festival later the same year where she presented the music heard on this recording.

Eugene Barankin, the leading music critic for the Moscow magazine Musical Life wrote about the event as follows: "The concert of Elena Ivanina, dedicated to the music of contemporary American composers, was marked by an atmosphere of free musicianship and her own magnificent professionalism. Ms. Ivanina held the attention and great interest of the typically demanding Moscow audience throughout."

Ms. Ivanina's special interest in the music of the Swiss-born American composer Ernest Bloch has led to recent performances of Bloch's music with the Amadeus String Orchestra and with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra in Moscow at the annual Palaces of St. Petersburg Festival and on tour in the United States. Simultaneously, she has performed and recorded chamber works of Bloch with members of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra's string section.

In recent recitals, Ms. Ivanina has found unique ways of successfully combining music with the visual arts, including the use of her own photographic work, slides and video clips. Ms. Ivanina's colleagues on this disc—flutist Alexander Korneyev, oboist Alexei Sheyin, bassoonist Alexei Sizov, and percussionist Alexander Suvorov—are highly regarded Moscow musicians who have participated frequently in Moscow Autumn Festival events.