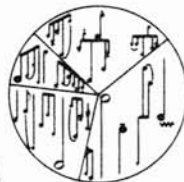


# Notes

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Music Reviews

tion: ca. 10½'. Performance material, available from publisher on definite order.]

**Richard Festinger.** *A Serenade for Six*: [for] Flute, Clarinet (Bass Clarinet), Violin, Violoncello, Percussion, and Piano. New York: Henmar Press; sole selling agents: C. F. Peters, c1996. [Notes, 1 p.; score, 57 p. Spiral bound. Edition Peters 67609. \$22.50; duration: ca. 15'. Performance material available from publisher on definite order.]

**Andrew Imbrie.** *Dream Sequence*: [for] Chamber Ensemble. New York: C. F. Peters, c1993. [Instrumentation, 1 p.; score, 79 p. Spiral bound. Edition Peters 67189. \$25.00; duration: ca. 17'. Performance material available on rental.]

Contemporary American music has long relied on its strong relationship with the dedicated publishing house of C. F. Peters in New York. For years, Peters on its own or as the selling agent for publishers such as the Henmar Press has consistently supported both emerging artists and established masters in their impressive catalogue of contemporary musical works. Four recent publications of chamber music for ensembles of mixed instruments here under review offer an excellent representation of this diverse and engaging body of American composers.

Edward Jacobs's *At Recess, We Play* is scored for a large chamber ensemble of flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, and percussion, and was commissioned by the Boston-based contemporary music ensemble Alea III, which premiered the work on 18 February 1995 in Boston. The score bears a dedication to Jacobs's former teacher Mario Davidovsky and is reminiscent of that composer's sound world. Jacobs's music, however, is in no way derivative. In *At Recess, We Play* Jacobs convincingly reflects an elegant rhythmic design and cascading timbral gestures, imparting to the work a strong sense of kinetic energy. Jacobs's keen sense of orchestration helps to define the musical

material of *At Recess, We Play* in a clear and directional manner.

New York-based composer Bruce J. Taub is represented by *Lady Mondegreen's Dances*. This work, scored for a sextet of flute/alto flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion, is music of extraordinary density: throughout its three movements (played *attacca*), there is rarely a moment where more than one or two instrumental lines are at rest. Within music of such thickness and weight, Taub manages to create clear effects. Rhythmic motives appear throughout, at times independent, but more often strategically woven into the textures as rhythmic unisons. This, coupled with Taub's economical use of musical material, makes *Lady Mondegreen's Dances* an intriguing work: harmonically and texturally dense (almost relentlessly so), yet treated with a carefully composed classical sense.

Like Taub, San Francisco-based composer Richard Festinger has written a work for what has become the most common of contemporary instrumental ensembles: flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion. *A Serenade for Six* is a large-scale work set in three distinct movements. Here, Festinger's classical sensibilities are combined with his usual knack for invention. A sonatalike form guides the opening and closing movements, while slower music rests at the center. This formal design, however, is in no way pedantic. On the contrary, this is music that sparkles in many directions and on many levels. The expressive nature of the shorter middle movement complements the quickly paced first movement and the extremely virtuosic movement that concludes the work. I have had the opportunity to conduct *A Serenade for Six* in performance and have rarely encountered a contemporary piece that invokes such energy and delight in its performers. *A Serenade for Six*, premiered by the New York New Music Ensemble, has subsequently been performed and recorded by a number of ensembles throughout the country. It is a virtuoso tour de force for instrumental ensemble, as gratifying to perform as it is to listen to.

The American master Andrew Imbrie is represented by his work *Dream Sequence*. Here, Imbrie creates yet another work of great scope and fantasy. Scored for an in-

strumental octet of flute/piccolo, oboe/English horn, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano, and percussion, the work encompasses three movements—a carefully constructed architectural whole that explores a vast range of musical ideas. Not unlike the cinematic episode used in filmmaking, *Dream Sequence* launches itself into a fantastical musical environment where startling images unfold and dissipate, at times ambiguously, at times with purpose. The first movement is remarkable for its simultaneous sense of dreamlike flight and unyielding focus. The second movement manages to juggle the grotesque and the playful with ease while somehow maintaining a clarity of direction. Like many of Imbrie's other works, *Dream Sequence* concludes with music of extraordinary expression. The third movement reaches a state of natural repose, and the lyricism of this conclusion, as if dimly lit, helps to define the work as a whole, ultimately giving it an even greater sense of depth and purpose.

The scores appearing here form an impressive collection of recent chamber music published by C. F. Peters. The commitment this publishing house has continually shown toward living composers is genuine and has come to be regarded, in many contemporary circles, as an honored tradition. The composers represented by Peters cover a vast range of musical and philosophical backgrounds, and the printed editions themselves are well edited. It is unfortunate, however, that C. F. Peters has continued to employ the least expensive and most unappealing methods for binding its scores of contemporary music. What is worse, the plastic spiral binding that holds each score together is almost always much too small for the number of pages it holds. The result is a score that makes a great deal of noise when pages are turned (not ideal for performance) and a document with pages that end up ripped and torn after several uses. It is confusing that C. F. Peters would show contemporary art such respect and attention in all areas except the physical presentation of the published score. Certainly, this significant and growing body of music deserves the full measure of attention.

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