

# AMERICAN ACADEMY AND INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

## MUSIC OF MEYER KUPFERMAN

### THE CELESTIAL CITY

Gilbert Kalish, pianist, performing live and on pre-recorded tapes

### THE GARDEN OF MY FATHER'S HOUSE

Max Pollikoff, violinist; Meyer Kupferman, clarinetist

### ANGEL FOOTPRINTS

Max Pollikoff, violinist, performing live and on pre-recorded tapes

MEYER KUPFERMAN (b. 1926, New York City) is self-taught in composition. He has been a professor of composition at Sarah Lawrence College for 30 years, where he has also served as chairman of the music department. He has received grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Library of Congress, in addition to the 1981 composers award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters that made this recording possible. His *Symphony No. 10: FDR* was commissioned and performed by the Hudson Valley Philharmonic in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's birth.

He is a virtuoso clarinetist and has given annual recitals with his "Music by My Friends" ensemble, a group which has introduced more than fifty new works by American and European composers. Kupferman's special brainchild, the Sarah Lawrence Improvisation Ensemble, which he created and conducted for sixteen years, is an important vehicle for experimental work by young composers and performers.

In the late '50's he started to compose music which utilized jazz materials within a framework of atonality. In 1961 he began work on his *Cycle of Infinities*, a diverse collection of almost fifty works all based on the same twelve-tone row. He has composed twelve film scores, among which *Halleluja the Hills*, *Blast of Silence*, *Black Like Me*, *Trilogy*, and *Goldstein* have received international notice. He writes:

"When I composed *THE CELESTIAL CITY* in 1974 for my dear friend, Gilbert Kalish, I conceived of the work as a concerto for piano and orchestra even though the piece has no orchestra. The tape accompaniment is scored for two tracks of pre-recorded piano, which provide a background that is as imposing and as colorful as an orchestra and that is more flexible. The combined sound of these tightly coordinated pianos creates a contemporary 'SUPERPIANO!' which can dazzle us with its endless displays of astonishing keyboard sonorities and which apparently requires an indefatigable 'six-handed' virtuoso (like Kalish) to operate.

"The work is a 'gestalt' piece, taking its form from my earlier experiments with unusual stylistic mixtures and combinations of tonality and atonality. Like a giant city which embraces all cultures and eventually develops its own, my concerto includes different melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and textural ideas which, under normal circumstances, have little in common, but which ultimately speak, I hope, in one expressive voice.

"While the thematic materials of *THE CELESTIAL CITY* are original, the concerto suggests musical epochs of the past. It is my conviction that anachronistic sound-images, imbedded in the musical structure of a twentieth-century work, produce a time displacement or psycho-acoustical disturbance.

"Although the concerto is in one continuous movement, the piece is divided into six major episodes. A gradual metamorphosis, sometimes supported by brief transitional phrases between episodes, occurs throughout the course of the work. The principal episodes are:

- 1) Atonal Images (slow)
- 2) Balinese Scherzo (fast and light)
- 3) Introspection (slow and free)
- 4) Macedonian Dance (rhythmic, ultimately driving)
- 5) The Romantic Age (slow, then very grandiose)
- 6a) Modern Jazz Cadenza (on the fast side)
- 6b) Funky Jazz Combo (bright tempo)

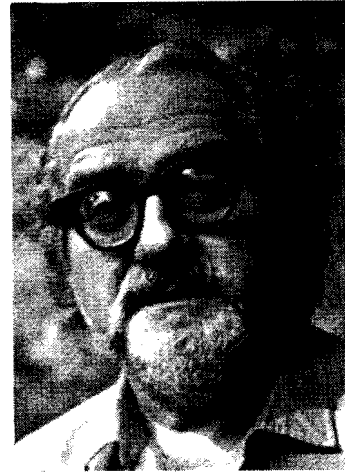


Photo by Howard Dratch

"In section 6b, the Funky Jazz Combo, one taped piano part creates 'jazz drum' and 'jazz bass' effects by plucking, strumming or beating inside the piano.

"I composed *THE GARDEN OF MY FATHER'S HOUSE* in 1972 in memory of my father, who was my first music teacher. Although he played many instruments and loved to sing, he could not read a note of music. When I was very young he would sing Gypsy songs, Yiddish folk-songs and Rumanian tunes to me and I would play them back on my clarinet, often with ornaments and variations. Sometimes he would accompany me on the piano; he had a few favorite chords which always seemed to pop up no matter what the tune.

"The piece is a musical ritual, based on a C-sharp drone, or pedal note, that is heard without interruption, across several ranges, throughout the piece. The violin's drone tremolos, often combined with perfect fifths and quarter-tone tunings, imply the key of C-sharp minor. The violin part is always rubato — lyrical, expressive and frequently very passionate. But, most importantly, the violin is always tonal.

"The clarinet, on the other hand, is atonal, its pitches drawn from the twelve-tone row that I used to write my *Cycles of Infinities*. The style of the clarinet is contemporary, using wide-range intervals, biting accents and unusual instrumental effects, including fluttertonguing and quarter-tone trills.

"In combining the 'contrasting' roles of the two instruments, I sought to create a musical ritual-game that would draw energy and bits of information from the polarized instruments. The language of the piece calls the listener's attention to the cogent features of both instrumental personalities in a manner that is somewhat similar to the way in which Yiddish combines German and Hebrew. The drone becomes more and more magnetic and begins to join the parts together until they become *one* in the final C-sharp unison."

"*ANGEL FOOTPRINTS*, commissioned by Max Pollikoff, was completed in 1973. The use of a tape part, consisting of two tracks of pre-recorded violin, continues my experiments with 'mirror' tape procedures begun more than a decade earlier.

"Written for violin, the work is a 'treble' piece by nature. While composing it, I discovered that my melodies always seemed to ascend, creating additional emphasis on the music's treble character (I soon realized that it was best not to fight this tendency, so I just let it happen.) A considerable range of coloristic, melodic, harmonic and rhythmic devices were therefore required to compensate for the absence of low notes, but no electronic tape manipulations were necessary.

"Much of the focus of the work is on melody, and, in creating the tape parts, I chose to stress similarities, rather than contrasts, among the different lines; for example, stretto-like canons are frequently draped around the live violin line.

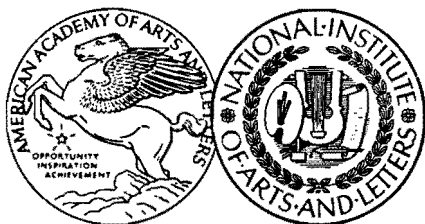
"*ANGEL FOOTPRINTS* is in one continuous movement, but many of its episodes are long enough to be miniature move-

ments in themselves. I found it imperative to close the compositional circle of the piece by creating the suggestion of an arch form; therefore, the opening and finale turned out to be exactly the same, except for the use of mutes in the recapitulation.

"The individual episodes vary quite dramatically in tempo, rhythmic style and scale. Sharp dissonance is an important tool for certain sections; the overall mood, however, is one of innocent, even temperament. While we were taking a walk after I had played her excerpts of the piece, my wife stopped and said, 'It sounds like angel footprints.'"

GILBERT KALISH fully deserves his reputation as a master pianist. All of his performances and recordings seem to generate superlatives. In addition to a heavy schedule of recitals and master classes, he is pianist with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players and the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, head of keyboard activities at Tanglewood and frequent guest artist with leading ensembles.

MAX POLLIKOFF is one of the wonders of today's music world. A former child prodigy, he is known as a recitalist extraordinary and creator of New York's Music in Our Time, a series that has introduced more than 250 contemporary works.



This record is sponsored by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters as part of its music awards program. Four cash awards and a CRI recording are given annually to honor and encourage promising composers and to help them continue their creative work; Meyer Kupferman was a winner in 1981.

This recording employed hand-made ribbon microphones in pairs, spaced six feet apart, in the best available acoustical environment. Their output was fed to a 30 IPS Studer A-80 tape recorder, slightly modified for constant velocity record-playback characteristics, using half-inch tape with two channels, each channel almost 1/4-inch wide. In this way the need for conventional (and troublesome) noise reduction devices was eliminated and the resulting reproduction challenges the digital storage method so far as clarity and cleanliness of sound are concerned. Lacquer masters were cut from the original tapes, employing an Ortofon transducer system with motional feedback. To minimize groove echo, the lacquer masters were processed within twelve hours using the latest European equipment and techniques. Strict quality control pressings were made of the purest available vinyl.

This record was made possible by grants from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University and private donors.

THE CELESTIAL CITY — 24'56"

THE GARDEN — 8 min.

ANGEL FOOTPRINTS — 18'13"

All General Music Publishing Co. (ASCAP)

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