

FANTASY CONCERTO

for VIOLIN and ORCHESTRA

by
**MEYER
KUPFERMAN**

The Orchestral
Music of
Meyer
Kupferman
Vol. 6.



Raimundas Katilius
violin

Gintaras Rinkevičius
conductor

DDD

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**THE LITHUANIAN STATE
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

“FANTASY CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA”

Originally commissioned by the American violinist Helen Armstrong in the early 1970's, the **Fantasy Concerto for Violin and Orchestra** was completed during the winter of 1995 in Rhinebeck, New York.* To Meyer Kupferman the work represented a deep compositional struggle of nearly twenty years. In some ways the heroic nature of this music ran a close artistic parallel with its sister work, *The Moor's Concerto* (for piano and orchestra – CD110) which also took many years to compose and also shared an epic-romantic aesthetic. Indeed the composer's commitment to his “Gestalt” style clearly left its neo-romantic imprint on other of his concerti composed during the same twenty-year period: **Concerto for Cello, Tape and Orchestra** (Vox), **Clarinet Concerto** (CRI), **Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra** (CD113), **A Little Ivory Concerto** (CD101) and his huge **Concerto for Six Instruments and Orchestra** (still unperformed). Although the solo roles for these and other concerti are most demanding, there is little doubt in my mind that the enormously challenging nature of the violin part alone ranks Kupferman's **Fantasy Concerto** as one of the most difficult concerti of the Twentieth Century.

The work, conceived in one movement, opens with a long clarinet solo playing the principal theme, (Kupferman himself, by the way, is a virtuoso clarinetist). We hear a warm and expressive melody that slowly lifts the clarinet to higher, more poignant cadential turns. Much later, after the emerging dramatic reality of the concerto's image has been established, both orchestra and violin pick up this melody and develop it as the true centerpiece of the concerto. The principal theme is only heard once again at the end of the work, presented in three brief episodes. It is enough, however, to fill out the “Arch Form” clearly implicit in the composer's structural conception.

Throughout the entire fantasy the labyrinthine path of the violin stands in sharp contrast to its orchestral encounters, which are often terrifying in sheer power and sometimes very gentle in textures of rich and expressive harmonies. Fast, driving accompanimental episodes are also characteristic of the refined rhythmic orchestration which abounds in the piece.

“My concerto,” says Meyer Kupferman, “is like a complex mythological adventure with the violin representing the heroic renewals of youth, love and the quest for beauty and eternal truth.”

As one studies the intense instrumental gestures throughout the score, one discovers it is almost as if there were fragments of a great classic drama sequestered in the music with the listener free to create his own unique continuity. This is a thematic concerto built from the expressive moods and colors of many extended melodies and short rhythmic tunes. There is nothing abstract about the developmental counterpoint in the concerto. Instead Kupferman has re-invented his craft to find the answers to his compositional needs.

The fantasy boasts of two violin cadenzas, one immediately following the first Allegro near the beginning of the piece. A dangerous daredevil high wire act, this cadenza suggests a gambit of passionate virtuosity almost as a way of life for the concerto. The second cadenza is heard halfway through the work. More lyrical in character, the violin seems to focus on tiny fragments of earlier themes. A sense of quiet restlessness, however, remains in evidence. Suddenly the path of the cadenza takes a surprising turn and moves into a sharply accented rhythmic mode, throwing sparks out in all directions. But in one mind-blowing gesture the violin springs forward again into the main body of the concerto.

If there were separate movements to Kupferman's fantasy I would say that a fast, colorful scherzo and an extremely slow passacaglia provide the final two. The scherzo hops from tune to tune revealing a light-hearted, folk-like spirit. The passacaglia, which prepares us for the end, evolves into a quiet meditation. At the final moment we hear an echo of the principal theme moving into the highest register of the violin... and all this gently floats away in a wispy flurry of trills.

The **Fantasy Concerto for Violin and Orchestra** seems, to my mind, to be a deep personal exploration for Meyer Kupferman, allowing him to move closer to the very meaning of his art. The twenty years of its evolution are evident in every gesture and instrumental color and ennoble the listener by the mere substantiality of the finished product. The boldness of its vision and the unique mastery of its execution allow this concerto to stand proudly among the great concerti of this century.

Notes by Christopher Vassiliades

* The composer wishes to extend his heartfelt thanks to Helen Armstrong for her helpful assistance, both during the 1970's and in the 1990's working on the concerto. Unfortunately, due to the pressures of her schedule, Miss Armstrong was unable to record the work at this time.

Violinist RAIMUNDAS KATILIUS

Raimundas Katilius began his career as violinist at the Vilnius M.K. Ciurlionis Arts School. After that he continued his studies at the Vilnius State Conservatoire and the Moscow State Conservatoire. Here his teacher was the famous Russian violinist and pedagogue Prof. Igor Bezrodny. Under his guidance R. Katilius perfected the mastership of performing Art at the post graduate courses.

Still in the years of his studies R. Katilius became the winner of two violin contests in Helsinki (1970) and in Montreal (1972). Being first violinist in the quartet of the students and post-graduates of the Moscow Conservatoire R. Katilius won first prizes at contests in Belgrade (1971) and Bratislava (1972).

R. Katilius performed concertos with chamber and symphony orchestras in many countries of the world, such as England, Belgium, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Tunisia, USA, Mexico, Cuba, Israel and others.

He participated in International Festivals like "Helsinki Festival" (Finland), "Servantin Festival" (Mexico), "Prague Spring," Baltic Countries Art Festival in Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, in the Contemporary Music Budapest and others.

R. Katilius was featured soloist with orchestras of Germany, Sweden, Finland, Mexico, USA, Cuba, Turkey, Russia and with Moscow Philharmonic and St. Petersburg Philharmonic.

Mr. Katilius' New York debut took place the 8th of March, 1992, at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. R. Katilius is a dedicated performer of contemporary music. Many works were dedicated to him, such as "Two by One," a piece of American composer C. First, which has been performed in America and other countries with great success.

R. Katilius is Professor of violin at the Lithuanian Academy of music. He has been awarded the National Prize of Lithuania (1981, 1995).

"...Meyer Kupferman's Fantasy Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is one of the most significant concertos of the 20th century master violin works in which philosophy, ballad and genre scenes are skillfully connected. The use of virtuosity and orchestration have not only been conceived in deep admiration of separate episodes or compositional elements, but are the expression of humane ideals. To my mind this concerto goes side by side with the Bartok and Shostakovich Concertos for violin. ...this music is really very talented..."

Raimundas Katilius
1996 Vilnius

Conductor GINTARAS RINKEVIČIUS

Gintaras Rinkevicius was born in 1960. He studied in Vilnius M. K. Ciurlionis Gymnasium of Arts and graduated from St. Petersburg Conservatoire in 1983. He undertook post-graduate studies in Moscow Conservatoire in the class of professor Yuri Simonov.

He was a winner of the Fifth All-Union Conductor's Competition of the former USSR in Moscow. In 1985 he was a winner of the International Competition in West Berlin of Herbert von Karajan Fund. And in 1986 he became a laureate of Budapest Competition *In Memoriam Janos Ferencsik*.

In June of 1992 Gintaras Rinkevicius staged and conducted Verdi's *Nabucco* in the Lithuanian Opera Theatre in Vilnius. This opera was also shown in the Verdi Roncole Festival in Italy (1992), in the first International Theatre Festival (LIFE) in Vilnius, and in the Savonlinna Music Festival in Finland. In 1994 Rinkevicius staged A. Dvorak's *Requiem* in the Lithuanian Opera Theatre. The latest Rinkevicius's work in the field of opera is a series of staged performances of *Der fliegende Holländer* by Richard Wagner in three Lithuanian theatres in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipeda. This project was realised with the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, the Latvian State Academic Choir *Latvija*, and guest soloists and dancers.

Gintaras Rinkevicius has toured several times in France, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

He gave concerts in Major concert halls of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Paris. He has also toured Hungary, the Czech Republic, Austria, Greece, and neighboring Latvia.

Since 1988 Gintaras Rinkevicius has been the chief conductor and artistic director of Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra. It was with this orchestra, that he gave concerts in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, and Salzburg. In 1991 and 1995 Rinkevicius with this orchestra made two big tours in Italy. Maestro Gintaras Rinkevicius and the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra participated in various international music festivals, such as Antibes, Kortrijk, Estoril, Warsaw Autumn Festival and *Europamusicale* in Munich. In the latter the orchestra was the only ensemble to represent Lithuania. In addition, in 1994 and 1995 the orchestra was invited to participate in the Festival Costa do Estoril in Lisbon, Portugal. It gave several performances here including the ones with well-known Brazilian pianist and composer Egberto Gismonti and a concert with the renowned English composer Michael Nyman. In 1994 there were concerts in other European music festivals – Wiltz (Luxembourg), Pontivy (France), Sisteron Festival in France and the Nyon rock music Festival in Switzerland. In October 1995 several concerts in Switzerland and Germany were given with the pianist Nikolaj Petrov and in Vilnius with one of the most famous violinists of the world, Viktor Tretjakov. In December 1995 a tour in Holland was made together with S. Petersburg's ballet company consisting of eighteen performances of *Swan Lake* and *Giselle* in the most famous venues in Holland. It also made a successful debut in Great Britain taking part in Chichester Festivities.

The first CD of the orchestra was released in October 1992. Compositions by M.K. Ciurlionis, the classic of Lithuanian national art and music – tone poems *In The Forest* and *The Sea* – were recorded there. The orchestra has recorded its second CD, with Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5 and 6 CD's of popular symphonic music for PolyGram company. The ensemble also recorded a CD in Vilnius with the Brazilian composer, pianist, and guitarist Egberto Gismonti. The company ECM will release this disk in 1997.

“My Music...” by Meyer Kupferman

The music I love to write often crosses over a broad spectrum of styles usually characterized by tonal and atonal positions. Since I have been doing this sort of thing for fifty years, the notion of mixing opposing elements which is very natural for me has included thematic and a thematic materials, jazz and non-jazz ideas and a host of rhythmic and textural opposites that I would prefer to describe as dynamic or “creative polarization”. As for performing artists, my best players and interpreters are those who have a real feel for these aesthetic games; they must be artists who command considerable virtuosity and a deeply rooted expressivity, since my work often touches on neo-romantic performance traditions.

I suppose I should admit at this point that in the early days I was very quickly hooked on the challenge of big, romantic forms. This became evident as soon as I started composing for orchestra: My first symphony, first piano concerto, first cello concerto and first opera were all completed before I was twenty-one. Although these were never listed as tone-poems, it was for myself alone that these symphonic pieces were based on folk legends, fragments of mythology or the rich passions of epic poetry.

After working in a free chromatic style during the 1940's, the twelve-tone system gradually occupied more and more of my attention. Since I was totally self-taught in music composition and wore no academic handcuffs to hold me back or keep me in line, I plunged right in and freely adapted the whole dodecaphonic system to my own selfish needs. Thinking that I had stumbled upon a gold mine, I created a form where each new work was based on a rotating series of tone centers - clearly a contradiction of atonality! This kind of re-invention soon led to what I then regarded as my first major innovation: all forty-eight permutations of the row were employed in a symmetrical distribution of tonal centers, each seven bars long and each coordinated by and evolved from the

pitch sequence of the basic row. My CHAMBER SYMPHONY (CD112) was an early example of this tone-center rotation procedure. Since the symphony had a bit of success and was premiered on an important ISCM concert along with John Cage's LANDSCAPES FOR TWELVE RADIOS I was happy to continue in this direction...for a while.

The 1950's represented a period of many swings back and forth between this form of private atonality and my 'old reliable' chromatic tonality. Perhaps my LYRIC SYMPHONY (CD110) and FOURTH SYMPHONY (1955, Louisville) are the best examples of the latter approach. My SONATA ON JAZZ ELEMENTS (1958, Serenus), a freely twelve-tone, hard-hitting jazz sonata, clearly showed that although I might have taken leave of my senses writing such an enormously difficult keyboard work, I had not abandoned the jazz world. Dreaming about the mind-boggling operatic success of Menotti, many young American composers like myself were caught up in the operatic explosion of the 1950's. Stravinsky's THE RAKE'S PROGRESS was an important contribution and urged us on still further. Although none of us really succeeded, I did manage to compose four operas during this crazy decade: DOCTOR FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS, VOICES FOR A MIRROR, THE CURIOUS FERN and DRAAGENFOOT GIRL.

The 1960's marked the beginning of my CYCLE OF INFINITIES, a series of related twelve-tone works spanning nearly four decades all based on the same tone row. I became totally committed to this direction, discovering along the way that my 'Infinities' tone row was like a magic tune that could yield anything I required in terms of melody, counterpoint, texture or harmonic organization. My CYCLE OF INFINITIES started out with four different solo instrument concerts: unaccompanied flute, viola, cello, coloratura soprano and alto sax in a big jazz trio. Each concert became a spectacular tour-de-force for the artist, particularly since new echo techniques, theatrical illusions such as lighting and choreography, and an array of electronic devices which enabled these solo instrumentalists or singers to perform live against their own pre-recorded sounds - were all part of each 'Infinities' event.

Also, I composed many 'Infinities' jazz works like my JAZZ STRING QUARTET (premiered at the White House when Johnson was president), CONCERTO FOR CELLO AND JAZZ BAND (CD111), INFINITIES PROJECTIONS (for chamber orchestra - CD114), INFINITIES FOR STRINGS, JAZZ INFINITIES THREE for sax, bass and drums (premiered at the Library of Congress during the First International Jazz Festival) and MOONCHILD AND THE DOOMSDAY TROMBONE, a jazz concerto for oboe (Ronald Roseman) and a small group of versatile artists including the wonderful Jan DeGaetani who sang jazz onstage for the first time with this 'Infinities' piece. A highlight in my evolving CYCLE OF INFINITIES was an opera without orchestra, THE JUDGMENT, composed in 1968. The libretto was based on the biblical story of Lot in Sodom. Conceived in gigantesque proportions, THE JUDGMENT, in three long acts, called for huge stage sets, nineteen soloists, five choruses and absolutely no supporting instruments. I never concerned myself about where my poor singers would get their pitch or how they would maintain the twelve-tone intonation. Each singer had to have perfect pitch or a remarkable sense of relative pitch. Since I had worked with artists of this type before I could foresee no great difficulty. Now, however, I believe that I must have been wrong since THE JUDGMENT has still not seen the light of day.

The early 1970's marked the beginning of a major turnabout for me. My music embraced a new multi-style approach which I soon wound up calling "gestalt" form. Today I can safely say I wasted many hours hopelessly trying to explain to my academic cronies why I gave it such a name. My lecture in Aspen, for example, proved to be a bust until I played some tapes of my new "gestalt" music. Suddenly there was a glimmer of understanding. "Why does music always have to be consistent?", I asked. "Life certainly isn't except when it chooses to be!" My new "gestalt" idea provided me with a great *raison d'être* to explore expansive musical conceptions of changing elements or, in fact, totally contrasting styles so incongruous that they had no business being near each other, let alone in the same composition! Thus armed with the chameleon-like aesthetic of my "gestalt" idea, I could not only combine tonality with atonality but create a believable blend of music which could include touches of aleatoric, romantic, minimalist, jazz, electronic and even folk-like materials in the same piece. Eventually I dis-

covered that the "gestalt" traffic flowed better in large forms. As a result an avalanche of massive "gestalt" works followed: YIN YANG SYMPHONY, CONCERTO FOR SIX INSTRUMENTS AND ORCHESTRA, TWILIGHT SYMPHONY, THE CELESTIAL CITY/ CONCERTO FOR CELLO AND TAPE ORCHESTRA and MASADA.

The 1980's and 1990's reveal a continued expansion of my 'Infinities' cycle. I would not be exaggerating if I said my 'Infinities' row was like an old friend with whom I enjoy a visit a few times a year. My weakness for atonal jazz provides me with other aesthetic 'pals and cookies.' Speaking about 1990, it would appear I opened a Pandora's box with my new book titled ATONAL JAZZ. The book explains my ideas about twelve-tone improvisation and is published with an 'Infinities' play-along CD (Dorn Publications). I scribbled the first draft of the book on my way to Lithuania in that scary summer of 1990. Our nervous little caravan of soloists, engineers, producers and wives sneaked into Vilnius to record my JAZZ SYMPHONY (CD104) without Soviet visas! Very dangerous - so was the music! But that's another story. I do not wish to give the impression that I abandoned my 'Infinities' fantasies, but my "gestalt" form eventually did emerge as the central preoccupation of my music from 1980 through 1996. The compositions of this period were centered around two instruments: the piano and the amplified guitar. The major keyboard works are THE MOOR'S CONCERTO (piano and orchestra, CD110), A LITTLE IVORY CONCERTO (piano and chamber orchestra, CD100), MASADA (piano and five instruments) and four big piano sonatas: THE CANTICLES OF ULYSSES, RED SONATA, TWILIGHT SONATA and SONATA OCCULTA. The works for amplified guitar are CONCERTO FOR GUITAR AND ORCHESTRA (CD113), ICE CREAM CONCERTO (for eleven players and ice cream vendor, CD109), THESE SUNS ARE DARK and HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK, both for solo guitar, GOING HOME (for guitar quartet) and ICARUS (for guitar, viola and cello).

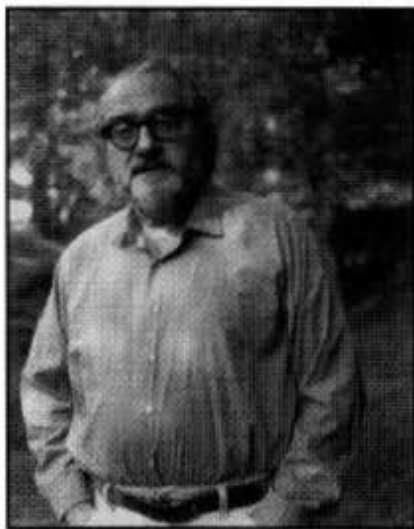
Just to show that I am still keeping my hand in there, I should explain that I do play my instrument, the clarinet, every day, and conduct once in a blue moon, or whenever it is less of a hassle for me to do it. My musicians are very sensitive individuals, often high-strung or just plain strung-out from too much concentrated work on my music. It is good, therefore, that I hold myself in high esteem as an excellent coach (I haven't killed anyone yet, but I have been tempted to many times!). I try to impress upon my artists that they should enjoy the challenge of 'impossible' passages, arguing, making revisions and planning important musical events.

In closing let me say that music has been my life and I am very grateful to have lived it. Although the hardships, struggles and disappointments are never forgotten, the real joy of making something out of nothing is always there in front of me.

Meyer Kupferman (1997)

The Orchestral Music of Meyer Kupferman

Vol. 6.



Meyer Kupferman

1 FANTASY CONCERTO
FOR VIOLIN
AND ORCHESTRA
(1995)
in one movement
(41'34")

Raimundus Katilius,
violin

Gintaras Rinkevičius,
conductor

THE LITHUANIAN STATE
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Raimundus Katilius



Gintaras Rinkevičius

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