

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 33437 STEREO

The World Music Theatre of Jon Appleton



PHOTO BY LUFTI OZKOK

DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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The notes which follow are not meant to explain the pieces on this recording. I hope that they will be read only after the pieces have been heard. I am attempting to communicate here something about my intentions and the discussion must necessarily be incomplete for several reasons. First, not everything I intended will be heard by the listener because no two individuals share the same aural experiences. Some listeners will hear these pieces in primarily a musical context while others will focus on the suggested dramatic content. Second, because we are continually expanding our aural vocabulary, the sounds used assume a different significance as time passes. For example, the sounds of a synthesizer or of space communication have become commonplace for many in the last five years.

These pieces are like dreams heard, where sound events are scrambled, where they assume an importance previously unnoticed, and most important, where there is continuous ambiguity. I am constantly working with sound objects on two levels: as recognizable referents and as musical gestures. Consequently one idea, the most obvious example being the human voice, can express either level or both simultaneously. The ambiguity that results from this use of sound produces a tension which is resolved by our aesthetic comprehension or our sense of humor. It is impossible for me to say more since I am the creator and not the critic — the roles are irreconcilable.

Chef d'Oeuvre takes a singing radio advertisement for frozen pizza and exaggerates the already exaggerated message as well as the musical techniques used in the mid-twentieth century to communicate such a message.

Apolliana begins with the aurally fascinating sound of earth to moon conversations and adds additional material, both musical and dramatic, which one might imagine as fanciful extensions. For example, added to the voice of the astronauts are the voices of toy astronauts which one activates by pulling a string on their backs. The music of radio interference is enhanced by adding an electronically produced counterpoint.

Sones de San Blas is the first piece here which introduces a foreign language and a foreign music. However, the goal of the piece is to explore first a dramatic and then a musical way of transporting oneself to a small coastal town in Mexico. The telephone call is a real one although the direction of the conversation was composed. The voice belongs to Marysa Navarro.

Nevsehir is a small town in central Turkey near the valley of Goreme. The piece is a encapsulated memory of village life, of children, of sacred and secular music, of the market with the sudden intrusion of a string trio playing Strauss for the benefit of Western tourists.

C.C.C.P. has the subtitle "In Memoriam Anatoly Kuznetsov" and is concerned with the defection to the West by the famous Russian author. The author now lives in London under the name A. Anatol. It is a political piece which uses Russian music as a means of communicating the anguish of one who loves his country but who is forever separated from it and its sounds. Near the beginning one can hear the voice of Tolstoy.

SIDE ONE

1. Chef d'Oeuvre (1967) 2:56
2. Apolliana (1969) 5:14
3. Sones de San Blas (1970) 6:20
4. Nevsehir (1971) 6:27

SIDE TWO

5. C.C.C.P. (1969) 5:16
6. Hommage to Orpheus (1969) 3:11
7. 'Ofa atu Tonga (1973) 7:25
8. Times Square Times Ten (1969) 8:56

Hommage to Orpheus is African in mood though it is not intended to evoke a specific culture but rather a very ancient one. It is a religious piece in that it evokes the aural image of worship to an unknown God. Since it is a musical work, it could even be addressing Orpheus, the god of music. The piece is dedicated to the American sculptor Varujan Boghosian.

'Ofa atu Tonga means "from Tonga with love" and refers to the South Pacific Kingdom of one hundred and fifty islands 450 miles east of Fiji. The piece represents a distantly remembered voyage by plane and short-wave radio in which the singing of the people, the whales and the waves are mixed with the sounds of everyday life in this corner of Polynesia.

Times Square Times Ten depicts the real and imagined layers of the city beginning with the street, moving down through the subways, the basements of theatres, down to the origin of the city and the groans that still are heard in its depths. The piece is an attempt at aural archeology.

Jon Appleton

BIOGRAPHY

JON APPLETON began his musical career as a composer of instrumental music. He was born in Los Angeles in 1939 and composed music from the time he was a child. In 1957 he went to Reed College where he studied music and literature. In 1963 he went to the University of Oregon where he began composing electronic music. In 1965 he continued his work at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center in New York City. It was there that he first began to use natural sound objects, voices, and non-western music as material for his own compositions. Two years later he went to Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire to establish the Bregman Electronic Music Studio. He is also an Associate Professor of Music at that institution. Appleton has received several awards for his work in composition including an American Scandinavian Foundation grant in 1968, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, a Fulbright Fellowship and a prize in the first international competition for electronic music sponsored by the Groupe de Musique Experimental in Bourges, France. He has worked extensively in France and Sweden in various electronic music studios. He is the author of numerous articles on electronic music and the co-editor of **The Development and Practice of Electronic Music** published by Prentice-Hall, Inc. He lives in Norwich, Vermont.

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All compositions by Jon Appleton, Bregman Electronic Music Studio,
Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. Published by
Chef d'Oeuvre Music Co. / ASCAP
Cover Photo by Lufti Ozkok
Cover design by Ronald Clyne
L.C. # 74-750411
Printed in USA