



THE LYRICAL
PICKPOCKET

eric stokes

Woodwind Quintet #2

1. Midsummer Weedlot 3:18
2. The Phantom Fakir 2:30
3. Blue Mountain Valentine 5:50
4. The Seagull Waltz 4:19
Riverside Winds

Song Circle

5. Night by Lake Calhoun 3:46
6. Chameleon Wedding 2:39
7. Onion 3:51
8. Car 3:22
9. The God and Goddess of Carrots 3:02
*Maria Jette, soprano; Trudy Anderson, flute;
Kathy Kienzle, harp*
10. **Give & Take** 3:28
Merilee Klemp, oboe; Jim Jacobson, cello

Four Songs

11. Waiting Both 4:23
12. Western Wind 1:32
13. Inscriptions for a Peal of Eight Bells 5:01
14. An Upbraiding 3:44
Maria Jette, soprano; Merilee Klemp, oboe

The Lyrical Pickpocket

15. Bull 'Gine 'n' Tarriers 1:57
16. Travelin' the Rocky Road 2:20
17. Breath Can Blow Both Ways...
Hot on Cold Fingers...Cold on Hot Soup 3:00
18. Pop the Whip 2:01
19. Go 'Way from My Window...from the door
...my bedside...bother me no more 3:07
20. Over the Deep Blue Moon 4:01
Riverside Winds; Sonja Thompson, piano

67:09



Music is for the people, for all of us. The land of music is everyone's nation – his tune, her beat, your drum – one song, one vote. Composers are called to serve the people. Performers are called to serve also by presenting the music in distinctive ways. The people are invoked to witness this service which is celebration of our time – spun being – the ineluctable dance of sound-spelled Life.
— Eric Stokes (1930-1999)



Introduction:

Eric Stokes was a “musical citizen” in the Twin Cities for almost forty years, teaching in the Music School at the University of Minnesota. Eric has been variously described as a crusty, eccentric, wonderfully humorous, very healthy and resourceful American composer of gentle, witty, lyrically accessible music, with a taste for folkloric Americana and a “Whitmanesque” ear (Baker’s). His operas have been performed by the Minnesota Opera: *Horspfa*, 1966, and *The Jealous Cellist*, 1979. Dennis Russell Davies championed Eric through commissions, performances and recordings with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra: *On the Badlands: Parables*, 1972; *Five Verbs of Earth Encircled*, 1973; *Pack-Rat (2-step) Slow (March) Drag*, 1976. The Minnesota Orchestra commissioned *The Continental Harp & Band Report* for the 1975 opening of Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. The University of Minnesota Wind Ensemble and Chorus performed his last work *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* in Spring 2000. When he died in an auto accident in March of 1999, David Zinman was interviewed for the obituary and spoke about their lifelong friendship and music making in this way:

We dreamed the same dreams when we were young. I went my way, and he went his way. I don't know if he was very well understood. His music was his own. It was very American and very poetic. I think he wrote poems every day of his life. I have a lot of the poems he just wrote to me and letters. Some of his music was perhaps a little crude, but there was always magic in it. His music will live on in the next century. But whatever happens with his music, my friend is gone.

Early Training:

Eric was born and raised in Haddon Heights, New Jersey, located about ten miles southeast of Philadelphia. His father was director of a Philadelphia office of an import-export firm and his mother was an artistic influence with her sharp musical insight and vocal skills. Eric talked about the place of music in his childhood in an interview with scholar Ann McCutchan in 1996. “As a kid, I loved music. I could hardly ever have enough of it, especially the classics, and I wanted to be part of that.” He said that he was called “to a life in music by the Sunday radio broadcasts of concerts and opera that my mother and sister sang along with.” He talked about the gramophone and radio introducing him to ragtime, jazz, swing bands, country/western, and popular song. When he was six, he began singing as a boy soprano in the church choir. He continued singing in the bass section when his voice changed.

In the same interview, Eric goes on to discuss his “calling” to compose.

“I remember one day when I was at the piano in the back bedroom, and I was supposed to be practicing for my weekly piano lessons. Well, I was bored with my assignment and drifted into endless improvisations. My younger sister opened the door and said, “You’re just making that up as you go along!” She was right and that’s what I’ve been doing ever since: making it up. After years and years, composing seems like the only thing to do – it’s the one thing that keeps presenting interesting challenges. Every piece is new and different.”

Formal Training:

After graduating from Haddon Heights High School in New Jersey in 1948, Eric Stokes went on to Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin and graduated in 1952 with a BM in Theory/Composition. He studied composition under a rigorous traditionalist, James Ming, “all the standard European things, but not a whisper about American music.” He received a MM degree in Composition in 1956 from the New England Conservatory of Music studying with Carl McKinley.

While in Boston, Eric had the chance to write theater music. He wrote incidental music for five plays that gave him an early opportunity to experiment. Realizing that it would be difficult to make a living as a freelance composer in Boston, he and his wife Cynthia Stokes moved to the Twin Cities in 1959 because he had received a fellowship to pursue a PhD at the University of Minnesota. “(Teaching) was the only way I could see to subsidize what I wanted to do.” Eric continued his composition studies with Paul Fetler, who had been a student of Hindemith at Yale. He also studied orchestration with Dominick Argento and received his PhD in Composition in 1965. He began teaching at the University of Minnesota in 1961 and remained there until his retirement in 1988.

Musical Influences:

One of Eric’s most important influences was the music of Charles Ives. Eric knew little about Ives until he enrolled in Johannes Riedel’s classes at the University of Minnesota in the early 1960’s. In a 1982 interview with Vincent Plush, Eric recalled Riedel as, “a German with unbounded enthusiasm for things American who was dishing out everything he could think of about Ives in his classes - this was a big shot in the arm.” With the discovery of landmark figures like Ives, there came the realization that one can be an American composer without apology, that there’s no need to be European in outlook or attitude or even to go to Europe for a sort of finishing process. Much of Stokes’ music after the mid-1960’s is rooted in something quite similar to Ives’ sensibility.

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski was in his second season as conductor of the

Minnesota Orchestra in the Fall of 1961 when he programmed *Antiphony I* by Henry Brant. Five orchestras are placed at various locations throughout the concert hall. "I remember Northrop Auditorium with these five orchestras in the hall. It was marvelous. It was a stunning thing." Brant's experimental approach towards sound, instruments, and spatial location became an inspiration for Eric; they began a lifelong friendship.

In 1964, Eric heard John Cage perform his piece, *Where Are We Going and What Are We Doing?* at Hamline University. Three tape recorders played Cage's reading of a text on three sides of the room while Cage sat and read the same text live from the stage. Eric recalled in an interview, "The work of John Cage changed my way of thinking about what is musical and what is not. The first time I heard him lecture was like being thrown into the first melt of the lakes in springtime!" Local conductor Tom Nee, who would become a major champion of Eric's music, extended the invitation to Cage and continued to play the role of impresario and musical provocateur in the Twin Cities and California for the next two decades.

Eric summarized these three encounters with the ideas and music of Brant, Cage, Ives in his 1996 interview with Ann McCutchan. "They served me well. They restored me to a kind of childlike innocence about sound. They rescued me from conservatory attitudes as to what is musical and what is not. They opened my ears – which had been stuffed to near deafness with academic givens and prescriptions – to the wonders of sound."



Commentary on the music:

The chamber works I have selected for this recording were written between 1962 and 1993 and represent the maturation of Eric's musical voice over three decades. *Four Songs for Voice and Oboe* was composed in 1962 and was one of his first commissions. The *Woodwind Quintet #2*, completed in 1981, compiles music of three decades demonstrating Eric's fascination with sound, space, chance, humor, and lyricism – "Midsummer Weedlot," "The Phantom Fakir," "Blue Mountain Valentine," and "The Seagull Waltz." *Give & Take*, a one-movement duo for oboe and cello, was written in 1984 on the occasion of the marriage of Randall Davidson and Merilee Klemp. *The Lyrical Pickpocket* was commissioned by the Sylmar Chamber Ensemble. *Song Circle* was written for the Jubal Trio (Flute, Harp & Soprano) in 1993 and funded by Chamber Music America with funds from The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Woodwind Quintet #2 was commissioned by a Young Audiences quintet and premiered in 1981. As with many of Eric's compositions, various movements call for audience participation. In the first movement, "Midsummer Weedlot," audience members are divided into five choirs of sound to simulate the random sounds of wind, weeds, insects, and water: tongue clicks, finger snaps, pencils clicks, gentle hissing, hand rubbing, palms rubbing, fingers snaps, and "playing" the tines of a comb. Similarly, the quintet omits one of the players in "The Phantom Fakir" as students guess which part is the "phantom faker."

Song Circle was written in 1993 for the Jubal Trio, premiered in New York on January 16, 1994 and commissioned with funding from Chamber Music America and The Pew Charitable Trusts. The whimsical poems by Robert Samaratto, Eric Stokes and Keith Gunderson (all three good friends) form a musico-dramatic tour de force requiring the singer to be humorous, suspenseful, virtuosic...and a percussionist.

NIGHT BY LAKE CALHOUN (Eric Stokes)

Bark gloved,
Bobbin branched
Your needling fingers threading wind
Wynd that scuffling sound,
That autumn wound
Softly round the heart.

CHAMELEON WEDDING (Keith Gunderson)

lizard
married
lizard
on a leaf
yesterday
and the
bridesmaids
all wore
red
lovely red
no, brown
no, green
no, red
lovely red
o well
anyway
nonetheless
what-the-hell
on a leaf
yesterday,
lizard
married
lizard
and it
looked o. k.

ONION (Robert Samaratto)

Tear jerker – sob sister
you are the fruit of sorrow.
Your story is as old as life.

For the death of my father
I mourned three days,
for my mother
I cry only feathers and dust.
But when you come apart in my hands
tears bloom in my eyes
I swim your sorrow, universal sorrow
in water dense as blindness.

CAR (Eric Stokes)

God plies my throttle
I do His speed
under His foot
my pedals work
We accelerate.
My tire treads go
‘round rosaries unnumbered.
they repeat.
the brakes are many.
They mark my way.
He holds a mirror to my past
sees through glass
my dark’ning road
and into nightfall as We go,
my beams like motes in others’ eyes,
my speakers giving useless news and melodies
that play across the rhythms of my racing heart
He drives.

THE GOD AND GODDESS OF CARROTS (Keith Gunderson)

The god	The god-
of the	-dess of
carrots	carrots
is	is
orange	green
all	all
orange.	green.
Grumpy	She
and	lies with
stiff	the wind,
he	she
sulks	waves to
in a	the
hole.	rabbits.

Give & Take demonstrates Eric’s sense of humor that can be found in so much of his music. It is in a very traditional ABA form – the A section explores of the tuning pitch “A-440” with pitch bends for both instruments. The B section is jazzy and uses the octatonic scale in a conversational dialogue (some would say a “married argument”) between the oboe and cello.

Four Songs for soprano and oboe is an early commission received after Eric's move to the Twin Cities. During 1963, a group of friends commissioned him to write a surprise farewell for University of Minnesota physicist, Warren Cheston (a fine oboist) and his soprano wife. The premiere took place at the home of Helen Rice and Arnold Walker – with Helen singing and oboist Phyllis Blood.

WAITING BOTH (Thomas Hardy)

A star looks down at me,
And says: "Here I and you
Stand, each in our degree:
What do you mean to do, –
Mean to do?"

I say: "For all I know,
Wait, and let Time go by,
Till my change come." – "Just so,"
The star says, "So mean I,
So mean I."

WESTERN WIND (Anonymous Olde English)

O Western Wind, when wilt thou blow that the small rain down can rain?
Christ, if my love were still in my arms and I in my bed again.

INSCRIPTIONS FOR A PEAL OF EIGHT BELLS

After A Restoration (Thomas Hardy)

I. Thomas Tremble new-made me
Eighteen hundred and fifty-three:
Why he did I fail to see.

II. I was well-toned by William Brine,
Seventeen hundred and twenty-nine:
Now, re-cast, I weakly whine!

III. Fifteen hundred used to be
My date, but since they melted me
'Tis only eighteen fifty-three.

IV. Henry Hopkins got me made,
And I summon folk as bade;
Not to much purpose, I'm afraid!

V. I likewise; for I bang and bid
In commoner metal than I did,
Some of me being stolen and hid.

VI. I, too, since in a mould they flung me,
Drained my silver, and rehung me,
So that in tin-like tones I tongue me.

VII. In nineteen hundred, so 'tis said,
They cut my canon off my head,
And made me look scalped, scraped, and dead.

VIII. I'm the peal's tenor still, but rue it!
Once it took two to swing me through it:
Now I'm rehung, one dolt can do it.

AN UPBRAIDING (Thomas Hardy)

Now I am dead you sing to me
The songs we used to know,
But while I lived you had no wish
Or care for doing so.

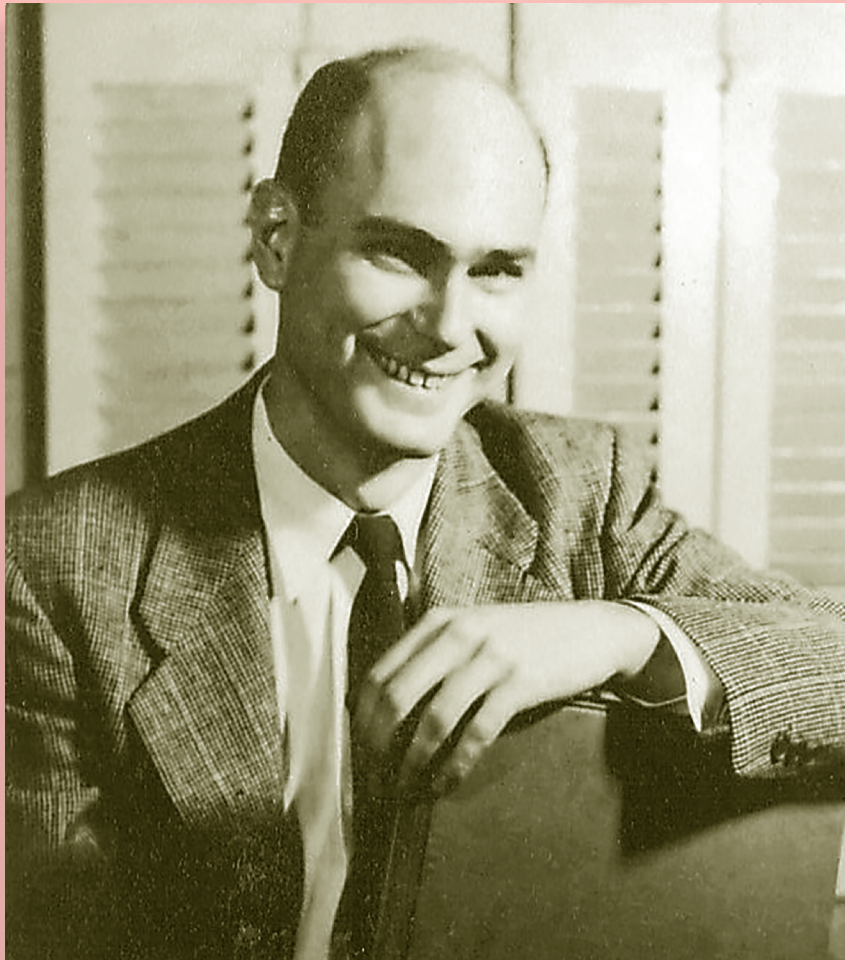
Now I am dead you come to me
In the moonlight, comfortless;
Ah, what would I have given alive
To win such tenderness!

When you are dead, and stand to me
No differenced, as now,
But like again, will you be cold
As when we lived, or how?

Eric Stokes: **"The Lyrical Pickpocket** *has taken me back to some favorite folk songs still flourishing at the grass roots level. I've combined some, added some of my own tunes and set them out in a fairly straightforward manner."* American folk songs often found their way into Eric's music during the 1970's and continued to find expression throughout his catalog of works. Eric often advised his students to look for folk material in either Alan Lomax's collections of American folk songs or in the collections of Cecil Sharp. The first piece in this collection, *"Bull 'Gine 'n' Tarriers"* is an old rail-

road workers song called "Drill Ye Tarriers" found in Lomax's Songs of North America. The second movement, "Travelin' the Rocky Road," draws on American shape note hymn tune traditions. "Breath Can Blow Both Ways" and "Over the Deep Blue Moon" are from an unfinished musical farce, *The Goose Sings Low*, that was composed two years before this commission. "Pop the Whip" is based on an ox driver's song. "Go 'Way from My Window" has the same phrase structure as the well-known lament in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, but the tune is entirely original. Written in 1990 for the Sylmar Chamber Ensemble, *The Lyrical Pickpocket* was commissioned with funds provided in part by the Jerome Foundation.

—Merilee Klemp



The Performers:

Trudi Anderson (flute) is an active freelance musician and recitalist in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area performing regularly with Augsburg College's faculty Riverside Winds, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Civic Orchestra of Minneapolis. She is a founding member of FluteSpiration Quartet (flutespiration.com). Her arrangements for flute quartet are available through ScoreVivo (scorevivo.com). Ms. Anderson teaches at Augsburg College and Bethel University and was President of the Upper Midwest Flute Association. Her degrees are from Augsburg College and Northwestern University. She has studied with Samuel Baron, Julia Bogorad-Kogan, Walfrid Kujala, and Mary Roberts Wilson.

Jennifer Gerth (clarinet) is principal clarinet of the Duluth-Superior Symphony and an active member of the Twin Cities music community performing with the Minnesota Orchestra, Minnesota Opera, Mill City Opera, and other freelance orchestras. She is a founding member of the Prospect Park Players and plays in the Lakes Chamber Music Festival in Alexandria, MN. Her degrees are from St. Olaf and Northwestern University. Jennifer is on the faculties of Augsburg College and the University of St. Thomas. She maintains a private studio as well.

Laurie Hatcher Merz (bassoon) is a member of the Minnesota Opera Orchestra and is a busy freelance player in the Twin Cities performing with the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, VocalEssence and Minnesota Sinfonia among many other ensembles. She has been teaching artist and featured soloist at the Sulzbach-Rosenberg International Music Festival in Germany and she is on the faculties of Augsburg College and Century College in Minnesota. A strong advocate for introducing children to classical music, Merz performs educational outreach programs for Thursday Musical with her wind trio, The Second Winds, and with fellow Augsburg faculty, the Riverside Winds.

James Jacobson (cello) is principal cello of the Minnesota Opera Orchestra and performs regularly with the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Portland Symphony, Intergalactic Contemporary Ensemble and many Minnesota chamber ensembles. He has studied at New England Conservatory and the University of Minnesota. Jacobson teaches cello lessons privately as well as at Augsburg College.

Soprano **Maria Jette's** career encompasses everything from early Baroque opera to world premieres. She has appeared as soloist with dozens of orchestras throughout the US; plus with the Berkshire Opera, Roanoke

Opera, Sacramento Opera, and the sadly defunct Ex Machina Antique Music Theatre in her home base of Minneapolis-St. Paul. She's often heard with VocalEssence, Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, Minnesota Sinfonia, Schubert Club, Lyra Baroque Orchestra, and on the last 21 years of Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*. Her discography ranges from Britten's folk song arrangements through P.G. Wodehouse's lyrics for early Broadway musicals. www.mariajette.com

Kathy Kienzle (harp) joined the Minnesota Orchestra in 1993 after a long affiliation with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Opera, and the Peninsula Music Festival. She received degrees from the Juilliard School and the University of Arizona. She has taught at Bethel, Macalester, St. Thomas, St. Catherine, MacPhail Center and is currently on the faculties of the University of Minnesota and Augsburg College.

Merilee Klemp (oboe and English Horn) is a member of the Minnesota Sinfonia and is heard frequently in diverse musical collaborations with her colleagues at Augsburg College, pianist Lorie Line, the Guthrie Theater, and with numerous music ensembles and artists in Minnesota. Her discography documents her wide interests: commissioned works (Fritz Bergmann, Dan Kallman, Cary John Franklin, Randall Davidson) and premiere recordings (Stephen Paulus, William Grant Still, Janet Jackson, Mariah Carey and Elton John). She has produced this recording as well as *Falls Flyer: new music for oboe and guitar* (Schubert Club). Dr. Klemp received degrees from Augsburg College (music education), the University of Minnesota (musicology) and the Eastman School (oboe performance and literature). Her mentors include Richard Killmer, James Caldwell, John Mack and musicologist Susan McClary. She is a Professor at Augsburg College where she teaches music history, oboe and chamber music.

Sonja Thompson (piano) enjoys a varied professional life as educator, church musician, theater musician, conductor, coach and performer. She is Assistant Professor of Music and College Organist at Augsburg College and Music Associate at Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis. She is a frequent collaborator with ensembles and artists throughout the country and abroad. Sonja received degrees from the University of Minnesota (theory/composition) and the Juilliard School (accompanying) while studying with Margo Garrett, Samuel Sanders and Marshall Williamson.

Matt Wilson (French Horn) is principal horn of the Minnesota Opera Orchestra and regularly appears with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra. He has also performed with the Florida Orches-

tra and South Dakota Symphony. He is currently principal horn of the Crested Butte Music Festival and has taught horn at numerous colleges and universities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. He is on the faculty of Augsburg College and a member of Riverside Winds.



Credits:

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