

## Reviews

*Apotheosis of This Earth: The Music of Karel Husa.* The band music of composer and 1969 Pulitzer Prize recipient, Karel Husa, is performed by the Ithaca College Wind Ensemble and conducted by Rodney Winther on the Mark Masters 3170 A/B MCD.

The impressive opener, *Smetana Fanfare*, uses two excerpts from the great Bohemian composer's symphonic poem *The Wallenstein's Camp*. This brilliant, sometimes-dissonant fanfare is scored for a large concert band and is flawlessly executed by the Ithaca College Wind Ensemble, directed by Rodney Winther.

*Al Fresco* was commissioned by Ithaca College and is a revision of Husa's Op. 7, *Fresques for Orchestra*. Husa notes that the work has no programmatic content, but the title stems from his admiration for painting, especially mural painting on wet plaster. Conductor Winther and the ensemble perform this highly difficult work with brilliance.

The *Divertimento for Brass and Percussion* has four short movements. Winther adroitly leads the fine players through the chordal effects in the first movement; the second movement is quick and witty, and the third is slow and plaintive. In the final movement, *The Slovak Dance*, the wind ensemble players do an excellent job of executing the difficult three-against-two structure with numerous mixed meter changes.

The *Concerto for Percussion and Wind Ensemble* was commissioned in 1972 by Ludwig Industries. It is an impressive work that features soloists, well-designed combinations of players, and the entire percussion section. The Ithaca College Wind Ensemble percussion section rose to the occasion and performed magnificently in all three movements. Gordon Stout, professor of percussion at Ithaca, is quite dazzling as the solo marimbist in the second movement.

The *Concertino for Piano and Wind Ensemble* is a revision of Husa's 1949 *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* and features soloist Jonathan Sokasits, associate professor of piano at Hastings

(Nebraska) College. Sokasits plays the mixed meter accents of the Slovakian dance rhythms in the first movement beautifully, imbuing the slower second movement with much emotion and easily traversing the cadenzas. The highly energized third movement concludes with a call and response marvelously performed by the entire ensemble.

Husa's first band composition, *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Concert Band*, is ably performed by Steven Mauk, professor of saxophone at Ithaca College. This three-movement work is extremely difficult. The first movement is mostly a cadenza; the second movement cleverly uses a triplet-sixteenth ostinato; and the final movement has passages with extreme ranges, difficult runs, many dynamic contrasts, and dramatically emotional melodies. Mauk is more than equal to all these formidable difficulties and performs this concerto with considerable virtuosity.

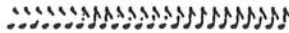
*Apotheosis of This Earth* is a huge undertaking for any band. In his scholarly program notes on Husa's music, Rodney Winther gives the composer's view of his own creation, "The composition *Apotheosis of This Earth* was motivated by the present desperate stage of mankind and its immense problems with everyday killings, war, hunger, extermination of fauna, huge forest fires, and critical contamination of the whole environment."

In the first movement, *Apotheosis*, the music starts slowly and gradually increases in volume. Winther and the wind ensemble demonstrate superb control of the discordant harmonies. The second movement, *Tragedy of Destruction*, features strident declamatory sections by the woodwinds and brass against a rhythmic background played by the percussion. The last movement, *Postscript*, depicts the aftermath of the earth's destruction and has soft chords, some chanting, and delicate melodies played by mallet percussion.

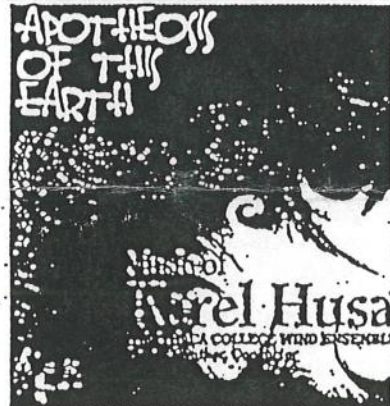
After repeated listening sessions, it is apparent that it takes a conductor of deep conviction and consummate skill to direct this marvelous opus well. Kudos to Rodney Winther, the Ithaca College Wind Ensemble, and the soloists for sterling performances of all the music on these two C.D.s

— Victor Bordo

# The Future of the Bandworld



Apotheosis of this Earth  
Ithaca College Wind Ensemble  
Rodney Winther, conductor  
Mark Masters 3170-MCD



The music of Karel Husa is without equal and has left musicians and audiences spellbound. This living legend is well represented in this extraordinary collection by the Ithaca College Wind Ensemble. The seven compositions featured are *Smetana Fanfare*, *Al Fresco*, *Divertimento for Brass and Percussion*, *Concerti for Percussion, Piano and Alto Saxophone* and concludes with the title work...one of the most emotional pieces of the twentieth century. My highest recommendation goes out to this recording. An absolute necessity for your library. Very informative program notes are included.



7/28 03

Dear Jonathan -

I see your name 2x!  
in News this week!

Hope all is fine

Timothy  
Kareton