

Steven R. Gerber (b. 1948)

"Steven R. Gerber has one of the most direct and readily accessible voices in contemporary American music...Gerber's urgent, highly charged language arouses graphic emotions, even at first hearing." (Amazon Rough Guides/online)

"...an important addition to music in the late 20th century, its sense of evolution from previous generations welcome at a time when change seems to have become a virtue in itself." (Fanfare)

Steven R. Gerber was born in 1948 in Washington, D.C. and now lives in New York City. He received degrees from Haverford College and from Princeton University, where he received a 4-year fellowship. His composition teachers included Robert Parris, J. K. Randall, Earl Kim, and Milton Babbitt.

Two CDs of Gerber's orchestral works were released on major labels in 2000. Chandos issued his **Symphony No. 1, Dirge and Awakening, Viola Concerto, and Triple Overture**, played by the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra under Thomas Sanderling, with Lars Anders Tomter, viola, and the Bekova Sisters Trio. KOCH International Classics, under a grant from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, released his **Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto, and Serenade for String Orchestra**, played by the National Chamber Orchestra under Piotr Gajewski, with soloists Kurt Nikkanen and Carter Brey. After the American premiere of his **Violin Concerto** at the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 1995 by Nikkanen and the National Chamber Orchestra under Gajewski, the Washington Post called it "a major addition to the contemporary violin repertoire: lyrical, passionate, beautifully tailored to the instrument's character and capabilities...Gerber has revived the spirit of romanticism in this work, with a strong sense of tonal melody and of the dramatic effects and surprises still possible in traditional forms...one of the year's most memorable events." And when Carter Brey premiered his **Cello Concerto** with the same orchestra and conductor in 1996, the Washington Post said, "Gerber's concerto seems to have what it takes to establish a foothold.... The music is composed with a fine sense of instrumental color.... Gerber has given his soloist some fine, expressive melodies."

Recent works of Gerber's include a **Viola Concerto** written for Yuri Bashmet and premiered by Bashmet at his summer festival in Tours, France; **String Quartets No. 4 and 5**, written respectively for the Fine Arts and Amernet String Quartets; "**Spirituals**" for clarinet and string quartet, commissioned by Concertante Chamber Players for performances in 2000 at the Library of Congress and Merkin Hall (NYC) and in Harrisburg; a **Clarinet Concerto** for Jon Manasse, premiered by him with the National Philharmonic Orchestra under Maestro Piotr Gajewski, and "**Fanfare for the Voice of A-M-E-R-I-C-A**," commissioned to celebrate VOA's 60th anniversary, and premiered at the VOA auditorium on a 9/11 memorial concert in 2003. The Fanfare has since then

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been performed by the Wheeling Symphony, the Omaha Symphony, the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) Orchestra, and by the National Philharmonic Orchestra at the new Music Center at Strathmore as part of the 2005 ASOL convention.

Gerber's music is well-known also in Russia and Ukraine, where he has had numerous tours with literally dozens of performances of his orchestral works as well as many concerts of his solo and chamber works. Several of his major works were given their world premieres there, including "**Dirge and Awakening**" by the Russian National Orchestra under Mikhail Pletnev at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, **Violin Concerto** by the Novosibirsk Philharmonic under Arnold Katz, with soloist Kurt Nikkanen, and **Serenade Concertante** by Chamber Orchestra Kremlin under Misha Rachlevsky at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. Gerber has written several works for famed Russian violinist Tatyana Grindenko.

Current projects include a new orchestral work for Maestro Vladimir Ashkenazy and a commission from The Lark Ascending for a new work for woodwinds. In spring, 2006 KOCH International will issue a new CD of nine of his solo and chamber works, spanning the period 1967-2001, all performed by violinist Kurt Nikkanen, along with violinists Cho-Liang Lin and Cyrus Beroukhim, cellist Brinton Smith, and pianist Sara Davis Buechner.

Steven R. Gerber: selected press quotes

Chandos CD (Catalogue No. 9831)

Every once in a while, something comes along that is so striking that the usual list of influences, metaphors, and descriptors becomes superfluous. Such is the case with Steven Gerber's First Symphony (1988-89). The three-movement work held me mesmerized and fascinated for its entire 25-minute length. (American Record Guide)

Each work is an important addition to music in the late 20th century, its sense of evolution from previous generations welcome at a time when change seems to have become a virtue in itself. (Fanfare)

Steven R. Gerber has one of the most direct and readily accessible voices in contemporary American music. The works on this disc...have distinctive and powerful melodic contouring. Gerber's urgent, highly charged language arouses graphic emotions, even at first hearing. (Rough Guides/online)

Gerber has a strong melodic gift...he's a composer with a strong and communicative voice of his own. (International Record Guide)

This is music of our time that I most strongly urge you to hear. (The Strad)

KOCH Orchestral CD (Catalogue No. KIC-CD-7501)

Steven Gerber is another outstanding composer of the new American school...The beautiful Violin Concerto is a superb example. In the first movement he uses hauntingly memorable material from his college years and writes unashamedly tonally and in sonata form...The Cello Concerto opens equally atmospherically and the soloist ruminates evocatively. The scoring is economical and very telling....These are splendid works and both soloists are fully worthy of them, and completely inside this consistently memorable music. The String Serenade...is hardly less memorable and individual... (The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs - 2002 Edition)

Violin Concerto

Steven R. Gerber's Violin Concerto, which had its American premiere last night in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, is a major addition to the contemporary violin repertoire: lyrical, passionate, dramatic, beautifully tailored to the instrument's character and capabilities. It was the highlight of a program that was always fascinating and often exhilarating: the 10th anniversary celebration of the National Chamber Orchestra...Amid so many competing attractions, the Gerber Violin Concerto still stood out as few contemporary works do in programs shared with older music. Gerber... has revived the spirit of romanticism in this work, with a strong sense of tonal melody and of the dramatic effects and surprises still possible in traditional forms...one of the year's most memorable events. (Washington Post)

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Clarinet Concerto

The world premiere of Steven Gerber's new Clarinet Concerto... [was] an important musical event. Written for Jon Manasse, ...the evening's soloist, the concerto is the work of a composer whose idiom is a coherent and logical amalgam of centuries of musical thought.

Its opening thematic material, angular but immediately memorable, serves as a structural element when it reappears in each of the two movements. The character of the solo line and its textural orchestral support evolve easily from sharply defined and disconnected points of sound to passages of easy lyricism, and all of this develops naturally and without any sense of gimmick or premeditation.

Most compelling, however, is Gerber's orchestration. Within the context of a spare pizzicato texture, he has the harp, in its lowest and most sonorous range, functioning as almost a second solo instrument... the development of the second movement's fugue theme in the low woodwinds is delightful. (Washington Post)

String Quartet No. 4

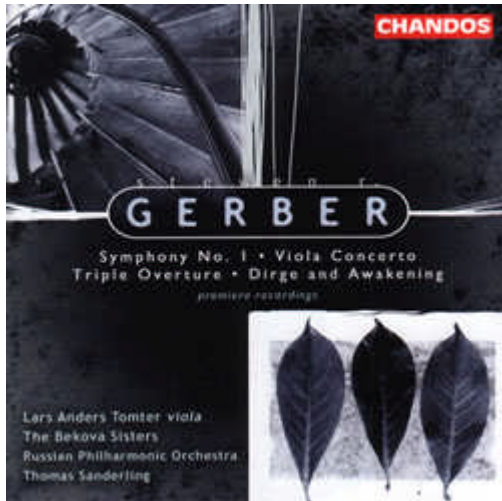
Gerber used lyrical, tonal writing as comfortably as unabated dissonance in creating stirring music with this quartet. Constructed of four short, highly inventive movements, the piece was well-received by the near-capacity crowd at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Fine Arts Recital Hall. The quartet opens with a 'Moderato' movement of diatonic melodies that washes by on a wave of unabated tension. The second movement, marked 'Lento,' creates a gnawing dissonance through shifting chromatics at close intervals. The dramatic center of the piece is found in the third movement, marked 'Maestoso, con moto.' A single theme is repeated continually throughout the movement in bold gestures that make it impossible to turn away. The finale movement takes ideas from the earlier movements and weaves them into a satisfying coda. (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

Cello Concerto

It is risky to predict the future of any new piece of music at a time when the audience is believed to be shrinking even for established classics. But Gerber's concerto seems to have what it takes to establish a foothold.... The music is composed with a fine sense of instrumental color, not only in the solo cello but also in the orchestration, which is vivid without losing the transparency essential in music for a chamber orchestra.... Gerber has given his soloist some fine, expressive melodies...the audience applauded him warmly and at length. (Washington Post)

Steven R. Gerber: featured recordings

Chandos Catalogue No. 9831 (2000)



Symphony No. 1
Dirge and Awakening
Viola Concerto
Triple Overture

Russian Philharmonic Orchestra
Thomas Sanderling, conductor
Lars Anders Tomter, viola
The Bekova Sisters:
Elvira Bekova, violin
Alfia Bekova, cello
Eleonora Bekova, piano

KOCH International Classics Catalogue No. KIC-CD-7501 (2000)

Violin Concerto
Cello Concerto
Serenade for String Orchestra

National Chamber Orchestra
Piotr Gajewski, conductor
Kurt Nikkanen, violin
Carter Brey, cello



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