

WALTER ROSS

PORTRAITS

from

LA COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Il Trio di fantasia

Oboe d'amore (Cor anglais), Bassoon & Piano



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A CM 004

Walter Ross

(1936-)

Walter Ross was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, in 1936. He began to study the French horn at the age of twelve and, by seventeen, was performing professionally with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra.

Although spending four years at the University of Nebraska studying mechanical engineering and astronomy, he continued playing with the orchestra. Ross decided to return to university to study music. After his master's degree, he went on to Cornell University for his doctorate. There, he was awarded an Organization of American States Fellowship to study composition privately under Alberto Ginastera at the Instituto Torcuato de Tella (Buenos Aires). He has been the recipient of significant grants and fellowships, numerous awards and prizes.

Ross began teaching composition and theory in the Music Department at the University of Virginia in 1967. He established the Charlottesville University and Community Orchestra, which he conducted for two years. Later, he formed a Baroque trio sonata ensemble in which he played flute and recorder.

During his tenure at the University of Virginia he served as Chairman of the Department of Music and was awarded a University Outstanding Teaching Award. He participated in regional, national, and international juries of composition and performance.

Walter Ross has composed over 150 works, which have been widely performed in over forty countries. Many of his compositions have been published, recorded and broadcast. He is, perhaps, best known for his compositions featuring brass and woodwinds. The influences of his own extensive performance background and diverse musical training (with composers who stressed bright orchestration and rhythmic excitement) can be detected in many of his works. Many of his recent pieces are representative of his current interest in neo-modal, pan-diatonic composition.

He has been a visiting composer at the Aspen Music Festival, a featured composer at several universities and forums, and a board member of the Capital Composers Alliance.

In 1997 he wrote a cantata featuring the poetry of Rita Dove, the American Poet Laureate. Recent choral works include 'Lux Aeterna' to honour the victims of 9/11, which has been performed upon a number of occasions.

Retired from full time teaching, Walter Ross currently performs on double bass in the Blue Ridge Chamber Orchestra. In addition to composing, he continues his interest in chess (in 1969 he won a trophy in the U.S. Open Chess Tournament), astronomy, and the History of Science.

Portraits from La Commedia dell'Arte

II Trio di fantasia

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My chosen *Trio di fantasia* is assembled from characters of the Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*. This form of open-air improvisational theatre began in Italy during the XV century and is still performed today. The characters *Harlequin*, *Isabella* and *Pulcinella* were the inspiration for this piece.

Harlequin (*Arlecchino*) is a clown - acrobatic and mischievous. His costume is a patchwork of colourful diamond shapes. He often maintains a close relationship with his audience, gesturing to them and involving them in his antics of trying (in vain) to trick his masters.

Isabella is one of the popular names for one of the *Innamorati*, the lovers (as was *Flavio* for the man). The pair often bore masculine and feminine forms of the same name. Young and in love (particularly with themselves), they surmount their endless obstacles at the play's conclusion. This unmasked couple is dressed in similar colours and the latest fashions. They are very vain and self-obsessed.

Pulcinella (sometimes known as *Punch* or *Punchinello* - the *Mister Punch* of England's *Punch and Judy*) is a pitiable, helpless and physically disfigured usually by a distinct limp or a hump. He alternates between foolishness and being very shrewd and joined the *Commedia's* ranks in the XVII century. He is always dressed in white and masked in black.

In the context of a theatrical concert performance, the players are free to dress in the costumes of their three characters.

The work, composed in 1998, was written for and dedicated to Jennifer Paull. It has three modal/tonal movements, which have the descriptive titles *Capriccio*, *Elegy*, and *Scherzino*.

Walter Ross
1999



Works by Walter Ross published by Amoris International

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Portraits from <i>La Commedia dell'Arte</i>	
I <i>Punchinello's Scherzino</i>	A SI 016
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Old Joe Clark's Musical Offering	A CM 006
Variations on ' <i>Auprès de ma blonde</i> '	A EN 004
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