

WALTER ROSS

PORTRAITS

from

LA COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

I Punchinello's Scherzino

Bass Oboe (Bassoon) & Piano



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AI SI 016

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

I Punchinello's Scherzino

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Scherzino means 'a little joke' in Italian. In 1607 Monteverdi published a group of light pieces for voice as *Scherzi musicali*. The Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* a form of open-air improvisational theatre began in Italy during the XV century and is still performed today.

As my title suggests, this is a lively and spirited work. It was composed in 1999 for Jennifer Paull and dedicated to her. There is humorous interplay between the two instruments, inspired by the antics of the character known in English as *Mr Punch*.

In Italy, he is known as *Pulcinella*- in Russia, as *Petrushka*. Stravinsky composed two distinct ballets for this same character under these separate names: *Pulcinella* and *Petrushka*. Also known as *Punch* or *Punchinello*, this personage is the *Mister Punch* of England's *Punch and Judy* and the inspiration for the satirical *Punch Magazine*.

Punchinello is pitiable, helpless and physically disfigured often by a distinct limp or a hump: a short fat buffoon or clown. He alternates between foolishness and being very shrewd, always dressed in white and masked in black, this character joined the ranks of the *Commedia* in the XVII century.

In the context of a theatrical concert performance, the players are free to dress in the costumes of three characters from the *Commedia dell'Arte*.

Walter Ross
1999



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