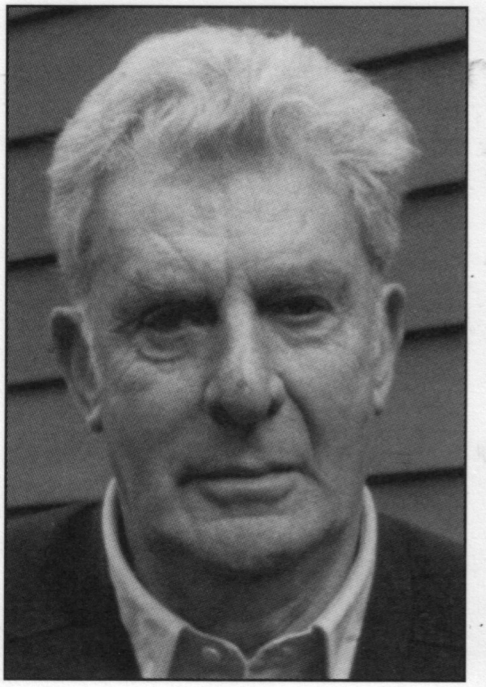
Robert Starer (1924–)



Robert Starer is one of the foremost composers in America today. Born in Vienna in 1924, he began playing piano at the age of four. In 1937 he entered the Vienna Academy. However, he left Vienna soon after the German annexation of Austria and continued his studies at the Jerusalem Conservatoire. He entered the Juilliard School in 1947 on a postgraduate scholarship and received his diploma in 1949. Since 1949 he has made his home in New York and became an American citizen in 1957. He taught at the Juilliard School from 1949 to 1974 and is now professor emeritus at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Robert Starer's orchestral compositions and major vocal works have been highly acclaimed. The 1973 premiere of his opera *Pantagleize* was one of the highlights of the New York season. The New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra have presented his orchestral works under the distinguished leadership of Leonard Bernstein, Erich Leinsdorf, William Steinberg, and others. He is the author of the widely used book *Rhythmic Training, Basic Rhythmic Training, The Music Teacher*, published in 1997, and the autobiographical *Continuo: A Life in Music* (Random House 1987), excerpts from which have appeared in *The New Yorker, Musical America, Keyboards Classics*, and *The London Times*.

Mr. Starer has twice been a Guggenheim fellow, was a recipient of a Fulbright grant, received a Ford recording grant, and has had two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships. In 1994 he was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Commissions have come from CBS Television and National Education Television, and in 1976 his *Journals of a Songmaker* was chosen as the companion piece to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on William Steinberg's farewell concert as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony. In 1997 he was awarded a Presidential Citation by the National Federation of Music Clubs.

Recordings of Robert Starer's compositions are on the VOX, Albany, Arabesque, Transcontinental, Golden Crest, CRI, and Angel/EMI labels. The recording of his Violin Concerto, performed by Itzhak Perlman with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa (Angel/EMI), was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1986. His directness in sharing his experience is frequently noted, as well as his superb musical craftsmanship.

"rich-textured, deeply expressive music that had something to say, and said it with fervor, originality, and conviction."

The New York Times

He has enjoyed success in every musical medium, and in each work, from solo piano music to opera, Robert Starer's work is:

"original in the real meaning of the term—that is to say personal."

Winthrop Sargent
The New Yorker

ROBERT STARER

Sketches in Color

Seven Pieces for Piano—Set Two

EDITED BY GAIL LEW

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Cover Design: Joann Jané
Cover Art: Detail of *Farm at the Pouldu* by Paul Gauguin

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Preface

Sketches in Color—Set Two are clever works each allied with a particular color. Each piece exploits different twentieth-century techniques including added-note chords, polytonality, twelve-tone rows, clusters in half-tone and whole-tone combinations, and the interplay of asymmetrical rhythms set in symmetrically shaped phrases. The pieces may be played as a set in any order desired or performed individually.

Robert Starer has developed an individual style marked by innovative tonalities and energetic rhythms. *Sketches in Color—Set One* and *Sketches in Color—Set Two* are imaginative, refined, interesting, vital, and musically alive. This music retains and sharpens the student's musical interest, whether he is a child or an adult. This is done while developing the techniques necessary for mastery of the instrument.

Gail Lew
Editor

Notes on the Solos

Maroon
This expressive work begins with colorful tone clusters. The sudden dynamic changes and register shifts depict a musical splash of color. The editor suggests pedal in the rapid sixteenth-note passages adding further to this wash of color. The piece is without melody or definitive rhythm, so care must be taken to bring out tonal color with careful use of pedaling and dynamics.

Aluminum
Keep a lively tempo for an effective performance of this rhythmical work. The polytonality is especially pronounced in measures 22–29 as the composer combines added-note chords in parallel motion with polytonality. Keep the staccatos short and crisp.

Silver and Gold
A slow, reflective and plaintive melody is introduced opposite a left-hand ostinato in Robert Starer's expressive work. He explains this compositional technique by stating, "Gold is threaded against it, with D as tonal center, a point of departure and of return." Editorial pedaling helps to maintain a legato sound throughout as the left hand repeats its twelve tones.

Khaki
The sound of drum rolls herald the opening followed by bugles and rifles marching along. Crisp and energetic writing features cluster chords, changing rhythmic patterns and a wide dynamic range. Keep the "drum rolls" short, and lift off on the second half of the count. Khaki is the color of a soldier's uniform.

Aquamarine
Jazzy rhythms and broken chords using a "jazz triplet" rhythm are featured in this mellow, bluesy work in quintuple meter. The left-hand accompaniment uses mostly blocked chords. Follow the dynamic markings in the right hand very carefully to bring out the subtle dynamic changes.

Chrome Yellow
The composer indicates a fairly fast tempo to be played in a "brittle" manner. Played without pedal, the asymmetrical rhythms can really be accentuated within the context of symmetrically shaped phrases.

Pepper and Salt
Widely spaced eighth notes alternating between the hands, a repeated-note rhythmic pattern and cluster chords built of identical intervals written in several different registers are the three basic ideas presented. The unpredictability of this non-melodic piece will require careful note reading.