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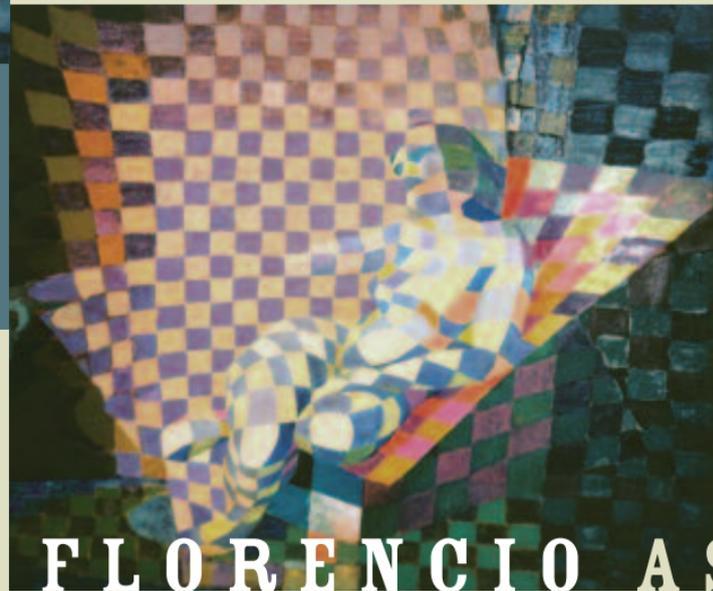
Hubert Geschwandtner

**Artwork:**

Alberto Gray ("The Night Visitor," front cover),  
Honoré Daumier ("Don Quixote and Sancho Panza," back cover).

**Program notes:**

Florencio Asenjo



**BOHUSLAV  
MARTINŮ  
PHILHARMONIC  
KIRK TREVOR,  
CONDUCTOR**

# FLORENCIO ASENJO

**A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS:  
IMPRESSIONS FOR CLARINET AND ORCHESTRA  
SINFONIA CONCERTANTE  
THREE IMAGES FROM DON QUIJOTE**

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## THE COMPOSER

**Florencio Asenjo** was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he studied the various tools of music making with the Spanish composer Jaime Pahissa. When Asenjo began his musical life, he found overwhelming the monumental amount of repetition that characterized much of Western music. At the same time, he noted that, in symphonies, concertos, etc., an initial strong theme was usually followed by a softer one. The two themes were not *formally* related — that is, the second one was not a variation of the first, but it was a new theme *aesthetically* and *spiritually* related to the first in a specifically meaningful way. It was not the contrast between the two themes that was important, but rather the fact that the second theme effected a natural transition to a new territory. Then, imagining that this transition might be continued indefinitely, he decided to base his composing on the creation of sequences of themes that, taken in succession, were each a development of the preceding music. Again this was not to be a formal development, or a variation on previous themes, but the creation of entirely new themes connected aesthetically to the preceding ones, a *development of substance* rather than of form, just as the various characters in a play do not repeat the same sentences over and over except for special purposes; rather, each rejoins the preceding dialogue to take it further, while retaining the continuity of meaning and atmosphere.

Asenjo labeled this approach *maximalism*, the objective of which was to achieve a high density of content in constant change. It was not that repetition was to be forbidden, merely used sparingly when really necessary. Standard formal patterns were to give way to the pure relatedness of new musical meanings brought about by their respective dynamics. Maximalism is not new. In the seventeenth century Antonio Sartorio was famous for the large number of different arias he included in each of his operas. The public expected such thematic variety, so much so that poor Francesco Cavalli's *Massenzio* was rejected because of its less exuberant style. Thus, Sartorio's *Massenzio*, with no fewer than 78 arias and duets — a number not unusual for him — came to replace Cavalli's unfortunate opus. In modern times, Witold Lutoslawski, who was in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Asenjo's current home), in 1991 for a performance of some of his works, made the following statement to the press: "I like when large-scale forms are built on many ideas. There should be a lot of independent ideas. I think that now the general need is for more substance in music."

## THE MUSIC

The three pieces in this disc can be described as predominantly "night music," a meditative kind suitable to the dreamy tales selected from *The Thousand and One Nights* and *Don Quijote*, with the *Sinfonia Concertante* as an appropriate nocturnal interlude.



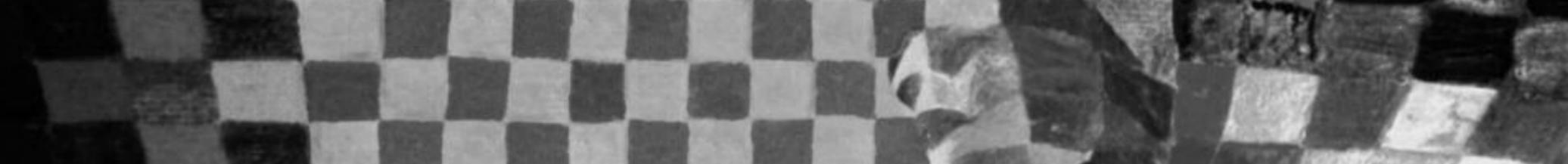
*A Thousand and One Nights* (2007) consists of ten impressions for clarinet and orchestra attempting to describe the subjective reactions to ten stories from the famous book. The clarinet represents Sheherazade's voice guiding the events related, events whose common moral is that the impossible does happen. Here are the stories chosen: The Thrall of Love, The Hermits, The Flea and the Mouse, The Ebony Horse, The Angel of Death, The City of Brass, The Lovers of Medina, The Spider and the Wind, The Quintessence of Things, Maruf the Cobbler.

The name "sinfonia concertante" has been used to describe different kinds of musical works. Sometimes it refers to a concerto for one solo instrument in which the orchestra has a greater role than that of merely accompanying the soloist; sometimes it means a concerto for just a few designated instruments; here *Sinfonia Concertante* (2008) gives more than a few instruments of the orchestra the opportunity to play solo as they emerge from the ensemble.

*Three Images from Don Quijote* (2008) are also subjective impressions from three chapters of Cervantes' book, a book which shows influences of "The Thousand and One Nights." Even though the "Nights" were not translated into European languages until the XVIII century, they and their forerunners were known in Europe long before, especially in Moslem Spain and Northern Africa where Cervantes and his brother were slaves for several years. Also, just as Sindbad the Sailor and Sindbad the Wise owe to "The Odyssey," some scholars consider it a given that Boccaccio must

have known the story of "The Nights" to explain its similarities with "The Decameron" whose tales influenced so many authors including Cervantes.

"The Enchanted Barque" shows Don Quijote at his usual mix of madness and gentleness. Crossing a river to help in an imaginary cause he gets into trouble with other boaters; after a few quasi-incidents, everything ends peacefully. In another chapter, as a practical joke on him, Sancho Panza was temporarily given the post of governor of an island one of his charges being to administer justice. A law that he had to enforce required that everybody who came to a given location had to declare to a guard the purpose of the visit. If the answer was found to be truthful, the person was allowed to proceed freely, but if found to be a lie, that person was to be executed. A man arrives and declares: "I come to be executed." Now, if the sentence was carried out, then the man was telling the truth and therefore he should not have been executed. If let free, the man was then lying and should have been executed. Sancho did not know what to do, but being a charitable person allowed the man to go free. Despite its airy appearance, this situation constitutes a serious unsolvable logical problem, an antinomy, a contradiction which is true and false at the same time. The musical equivalent of an antinomy is the dissonance. "Dissonant" does not necessarily mean to be strident and unpleasant. Dissonant means "to sound as more than one, to differ simultaneously in sound," something to which the ear gets adjusted when the sounds are assembled as in this second image. Finally, when Don



Quijote was about to die, he went back to his senses; at that point, Sancho Panza begged him not to die. “Do not die Señor Don Quijote” is an impression of that moment. But in fact, because of what Théophile Gautier said: “No one is truly dead until no longer loved,” Don Quijote did not actually die then.

## THE PERFORMERS

**Kirk Trevor** is an internationally known conductor and teacher. Music Director of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra from 1985 until 2003, of the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra since 1988, and of the Missouri Symphony since 2000, he has forged a strong musical partnership with three of America’s leading regional orchestras. Born and educated in England, Trevor trained at London’s Guildhall School of Music, from which he graduated cum laude in cello performance and conducting. He was a conducting student of the late Sir Adrian Boult and Vilem Tausky, and went on to pursue cello studies in France with Paul Tortelier under a British Council Scholarship. Trevor came to the U.S. originally on a Fulbright Exchange Grant. It was in the U.S. that his conducting skills led him in 1982 to the Exxon Arts Endowment Conductor position with the Dallas Symphony. In 1990 he was recognized as one of America’s outstanding young conductors, winning the American Symphony Orchestra League’s Leonard Bernstein Conducting Competition, which led directly to performances with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Trevor was from 1995 to 1999 Chief Conductor of the Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra in the Czech Republic, and in 2000 he forged a new relationship with the famed Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra in Bratislava. With the SRSO he began a series of recordings of American music for a consortium of independent record companies. To date, he has made thirty-eight albums of new American music. In 2003 he was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the orchestra, which he took on a three-week tour of Japan as well as to many concert venues throughout Europe. He has recently recorded symphonies by Dvořák and Mahler with the SRSO and has recorded movie scores for Hollywood. As a guest conductor, Trevor has appeared on the podiums of more than forty orchestras worldwide, including the London Symphony and orchestras in Hong Kong, Canada, Spain, Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico, and throughout the United States.

**Jiří Kundl** is first clarinetist of the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic. He regularly records for the Czech Radio and is a member of the Wind Trio Ligneus. The **Martinů Philharmonic**, named after the great Czech composer, is based in Zlín, a Moravian town in the eastern part of the Czech Republic. Its repertoire includes a considerable number of contemporary compositions. Guest performances have taken the orchestra to Italy, Denmark, Hungary, Greece, Poland, Austria, Romania, Germany, France, Spain, and the United States.