

The Music of Cosmos RCA, ABL1-4003

Those who saw Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, a thirteen-part series on PBS last season, won't need to be told how well the music blended into and enhanced the show's words and visual elements. But, unfortunately due to its frequently supplementary nature, the music used in film and/or television doesn't always stand up on its own merits. Happily, this is not the case with *The Music of Cosmos*.

For those who didn't see the hour-long broadcasts devoted to astronomy, space exploration and the wonders of the universe, the music used consisted of selections from works by such diversified artists as Vangelis, Dmitri Shostakovich, Johann Pachelbel, Alan Hovhaness, Isao Tomita, J.S. Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Roy Buchanan, Igor Stravinsky, and even Bulgarian and Japanese traditional pieces. Seventeen of these works appear on the album.

It would be pointless to comment on each individual movement as most of them are by past and present masters about whom a great deal has already been written. What is important is that this album brings them all together in one place and gives them other levels of meaning by juxtaposing them in sections created to serve just that purpose. Such packaging is inspirational in that it allows the music to summon up thoughts and ideas beyond the individual pieces themselves.

The Music of Cosmos is divided into six sections: Space/Time Continuum, Life, The Harmony of Nature, Exploration, Cataclysm, and Affirmation. Each section consists of music which not only emphasizes its main theme, but also enhances the other sounds in the same section.

Take, for instance, the section entitled *Life*. It includes four movements: a traditional Japanese solo reed flute piece called "Depicting the Cranes in their Nest"; Johann Pachelbel's "Canon on a Ground in D"; the Spring movement from Antonio Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons"; and an electronic version of J.S. Bach's "The Sea Named 'Solaris'."

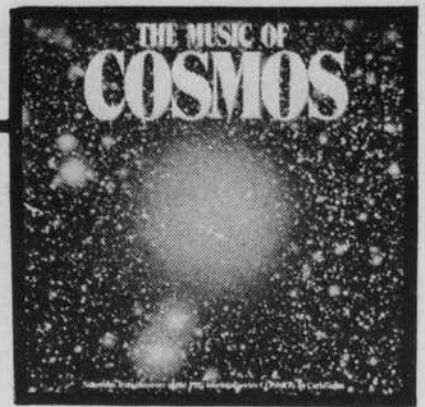
The first piece is a simple, lonely, evocative solo, very linear; the second is a much more complex, instrumentally diversified number with a distinctly circular construction (in the television series, it was used

when Sagan was talking about the wonders of the DNA molecule and its double helix patterns); the third is a joyous, rollicking celebration of the rebirth of nature each Spring (it was played to accompany a bicycle ride through the European countryside which Sagan was using to illustrate red and blue shifts in light and the probable impossibility of achieving the speed of light); the fourth uses a more spacey, oddly structured variety of electronic sounds imposed on a piece originally written for acoustic instruments.

The different ways of looking at different aspects of life are readily apparent in these selections. But on other levels, just the way they are put together on the album invite all sorts of ideas: The section begins with a basic, primal, simple sound and becomes more and more complex with each movement; it starts off with a traditional Japanese piece and ends with a modern Japanese composition. The first three cuts are acoustic, the last cut is an electronic interpretation of an acoustic piece — is this a comment on an evolutionary trend?

Whether or not any of these thoughts were consciously put into the structure of the section is not the point. What's important is that the album is arranged in such a manner that such speculations, and others, are invited.

Similar extrapolations may be made with the other five sections as well.



The Music of Cosmos is music to ponder by. Its sounds evoke images and flights of fancy which take us from the macrocosm of the universe to the microcosm of the single cell. It is the music of different extremes and cultures, it connects them and gives us a taste of the virtually infinite varieties of existence here on Earth, as well as other places.

An unfortunate aspect of this album is that the individual pieces are almost always only a part of a much larger work. The "flip side" of that point is that I'm now sufficiently inspired to seek out these composers and listen to other sounds they've created. To that end, the extensive liner notes contain complete information on where the individual cuts came from, even down to the catalogue numbers.

The album cover itself offers several of the more striking photographs and paintings used in the show as well as notes on how these specific pieces of music were chosen and why.

Much thought and imagination was put into the creation of this album. Much more may be had by listening to it.

— Robert Webb

Theater

RED, HOT & COLE Oregon Repertory Theatre Directed by David Lunney

Great melodies and sophisticated lyrics were Cole Porter's musical signature, and time has not dated his charm at all.

Great music outlives its composer and the four stars of *Red, Hot & Cole* pay affectionate tribute to Porter's prolific gift for song at Oregon Repertory Theatre.

Five of Eugene's top performers have put together a collection of Porter's best work. The result is a delightful, relaxed evening of pure Porter sung by people who really love his music. They love what they're doing and it's contagious.

Sharon and Neal Wilson, Priscilla Lauris and Brian Swingle, accompanied by Lydia Lord on piano, move from one song to the next with the same gracefulness found in Porter's lyrics. Each member of the quartet alternately solos, does a duet or sings ensemble while constantly moving across the arena theatre. The revue lacks dialogue, an advantage — by design or accident — that keeps the show moving.

It's the music that really keeps *Red, Hot & Cole* on the go. Included are some of Porter's most well known hits, "Let's Do It," "Anything Goes," "Begin the Beguine" (beautifully sung by the Wilsons), "Night and Day," "I Love Paris," "So In Love," "Let's Misbehave," and "I've Got You Under My Skin" — among others.

Lauris has a great voice for musical comedy and she steals the show in the lively second act with "Always True To You In My Fashion." She teams up with Swingle for an hilarious version of the romantic "So In Love." Swingle shows no interest in her antics and gives the song the serious attention it deserves.

Sharon Wilson shines during her solos, generally more somber than the rest of the group. Her versions of "Love for Sale" and "Why Can't You Behave" are haunting. Her clear, operatic voice is occasionally lost in ORT's arena arrangement. Just listen closely.

The first act is a bit more subdued than the second, when the group really lets go. Swingle and Neal Wilson are wonderfully funny in the first half of "Brush Up on Your Shakespeare." The whole cast does a "Cole slaw" of songs that aren't part of the featured program and wind up with foot tapping version of "Blow, Gabriel, Blow."

Musical revues are rare at ORT and director David Lunney has done a beautiful job with this expedition. His emphasis is right on the music and the singers. Sets and lights by David Sherman are simple and complementary, again paying attention to Porter's gift for lyrics.

Red, Hot & Cole is delightful, and ought not to be missed. The show runs through May 24. Tickets are \$5, \$6, and \$7.

— Sally Oljar

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