

9-9-1994

## Memoirs of Uliana Rooney

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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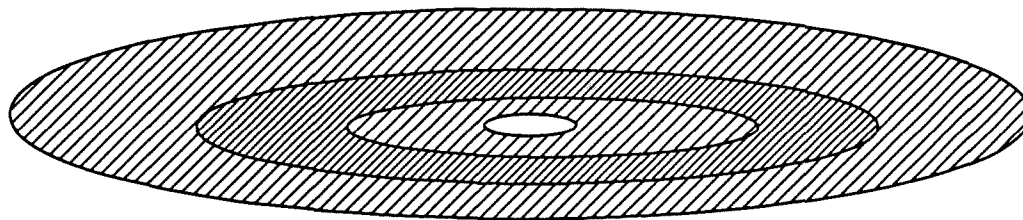
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# CURRENTS

the resident ensemble for new-music at the University of Richmond  
Fred Cohen *Artistic Director*

presents

## MEMOIRS OF ULIANA ROONEY

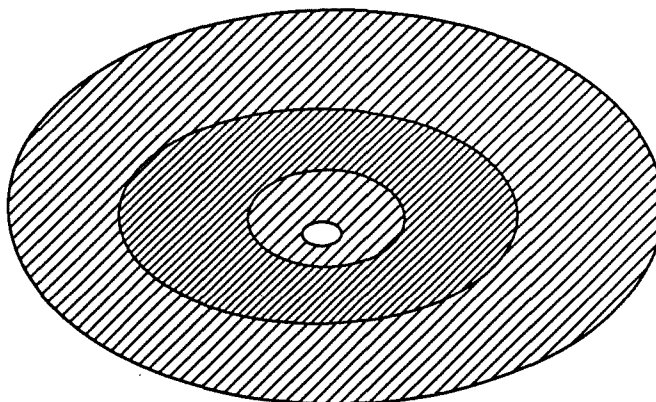
a multimedia chamber opera

music by VIVIAN FINE  
Libretto and film/slide sequences by SONYA FRIEDMAN

*premiere production*

September 9, 1994  
September 10, 1994  
8:15 pm

Camp Theater  
University of Richmond



CURRENTS

presents

MEMOIRS OF ULIANA  
ROONEY

*a multimedia chamber opera*

Music by Vivian Fine

Libretto and film/slides sequences by Sonya Friedman

CAST (in order of appearance)

Uliana Rooney

.....CHRISTINE SCHADEBERG

Narrator, Kerker, Salesman, Gustav Mahler

.....DAVID PELTON

Chorus

.....JENNIFER CABLE, TAMARA WRIGHT

Boris, Tommy Rooney, Secretary, Ben, Joe

.....STEPHEN KALM

Alma Mahler

.....JENNIFER CABLE

STAGE DIRECTOR.....WALTER SCHOEN

COSTUME DESIGN.....SUSAN COLOGNE

SET AND LIGHT DESIGN.....W. REED WEST

STAGE TECHNICIAN.....RICH MASON

CONDUCTED BY.....FRED COHEN

## CURRENTS PERSONNEL

Patricia Werrell	<i>Flute, piccolo</i>
Charles West	<i>Bb clarinet, Bass clarinet</i>
Laura Roelof	<i>Violin</i>
Neal Cary	<i>Cello</i>
Paul Bedell	<i>Contrabass</i>
Donald Bick	<i>Percussion</i>
Paul Hanson	<i>Piano</i>

\*\*\*\*\*

### Special Thanks To:

Suzanne Bunting	Bonny Hall
Catharine Kirby	Homer Rudolf
Uliana Gabara	Cari Borgna
Mary White	Randolph Foy

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The commissioning of *Memoirs of Uliana Rooney* was made possible by a grant from the Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

The film and slide projections were supported in part by grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts, government agencies. The New York Council for the Humanities provided research and development funds.

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### Film and Slide Credits:

Production assistant for film and slide sequences:	Karen Rush
Cameraman:	Jerry Pantzer
Film Editor:	Andreas Troeger
Film Editor of "All God's Children" sequence:	Herman J. Engel
Graphic Designer of film and slide titles:	Kathleen Gates, Gates Sisters Studio
Slide Photographers:	Paris and Clark
Stylist and Photographer of Alma Mahler slide sequence:	Jennifer Sloan

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This production of *Memoirs of Uliana Rooney* is co-sponsored by CURRENTS, the Cultural Affairs Committee of the University of Richmond, the University of Richmond WILL program, the Women's Studies program at the University of Richmond, and the Department of Music at the University of Richmond.

NOTES on *Memoirs of Uliana Rooney*  
by Sonya Friedman

The story of Uliana Rooney, a fictitious, feisty, feminist American composer, started with the obituary of a flamboyant male piano virtuoso from Eastern Europe. He composed film scores for glamorous Hollywood movies, lived a life of dramatic ups and downs, and frequently disappeared from public view because of some scandalous romance. He died in his 80's, and was "survived by his tenth wife, Doris."

Composer Vivian Fine handed me this obituary, saying, "Make him a woman!" And I did.

But that woman, Uliana Rooney, developed a life and a mind of her own. Born in Kansas, the child of Russian Jewish immigrants, she became a thoroughly American prodigy: a pianist who dared to turn composer in days when women were not even allowed to play in orchestras. As I conjured up her life from the 1920's to the 90's, Uliana (who never ages) kept getting involved in the major events of her times. And her various husbands/companions became serio-comic personifications of their respective eras.

It seemed obvious to me, as a professional filmmaker, that film and slide projections could replace conventional stage sets, and expand the drama of an American artist's life throughout eight decades. I wrote the libretto and the film scenario simultaneously; words, music and film/slide projections form a tight weave.

To date, I have translated more than 100 operas, writing subtitles and supertitles for libretti of works from Monteverdi to Schoenberg. I wanted *Uliana*, my first original libretto, to be totally contemporary in character. And so I was delighted when my cameraman said, "This opera is the story of my life!" I hope the work will be compelling to audiences familiar with operas, as well as to opera newcomers.

Vivian Fine's arresting score includes many brief musical quotations. In the opening sequence, we are, for a moment, definitely in Copland musical territory; and there is an echo from Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. When Uliana says "Bah to the Bourgeoisie," Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* appears. In the 1920's sequence, Vivian uses polytonality, new to contemporary music then; she also gives us a tango, the rage of that era. The Great Depression has a Brechtian flavor. And when Gustav Mahler forbids Alma Mahler to compose any more music, he sings it to a *lied* by Alma herself (freely adapted by Vivian). Throughout the opera, there are also quotes from Vivian's own previous works. After all, both Vivian and Uliana have been composing from the 1920's to today.

## MEET THE ARTISTS

VIVIAN FINE is a noted and innovative American composer. Fine has recently been commissioned by the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, the Harvard University Wind Ensemble, and Boston Musica Viva. The City of Boston honored her in 1990 by declaring a "Vivian Fine Week." Bennington College honored her with a retrospective concert of her works in April, 1991.

Fine was born in Chicago, where she studied with Ruth Crawford-Seeger and Adolf Weidig. She moved to New York City at age 18 where she studied with Roger Sessions. She has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation. She has also been active as a pianist and teacher, and was a faculty member of Bennington College from 1964 to 1987. She was elected a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1980.

Her recent works include *Songs and Arias for Horn, Violin, and Cello* (1990), performed by Chamber Music Northwest; *Drama for Orchestra, After Paintings by Munch*, performed by the San Francisco Symphony (1983); *A Song for St. Cecelia's Day*, performed by the Vermont Symphony.

Fine wrote the chamber opera, *The Women in the Garden* (1984), performed by the San Francisco Opera and by the Brooklyn College Opera. The opera's main characters are Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Isadora Duncan and Emily Dickinson.

Vivian Fine's most recent trip to Richmond was in October, 1989, when she attended a CURRENTS performance of her works.

SONYA FRIEDMAN is the innovator and writer/producer of translation titles for opera on television (*The Metropolitan Opera Presents, Live From Lincoln Center, Great Performances*, and so forth) and of "supertitles" for live opera performances throughout North America. Ms. Friedman is also the well-known, award-winning documentary film writer, producer, and director of over 30 films. She has received an Academy Award nomination, several Emmy awards, American Film Festival Blue Ribbons, and CINE Golden Eagles. Her many films include *The Great Cover-Up* (a history of clothing as an expression of our sexuality, politics, and social/professional roles: winner of Best Film, American Library Association; CINE Golden Eagle; American Film Festival) and *The Masters of Disaster* (a group of African-American youngsters from Indianapolis unexpectedly become national chess champions: winner of Blue Ribbon, American Film Festival; CINE Golden Eagle; NAACP Special Award; PBS nationwide broadcast).

Soprano CHRISTINE SCHADEBERG continues to receive critical acclaim for her dramatic interpretation and vocal quality, amply displayed in the standard operatic and recital repertoire as well as in her specialty of 20th-century music. She has premiered over 100 new works, many written for her unique talents, and she is recognized as one of the foremost new music singers in the United States. Her concert and stage performances span such diverse repertoire as the role of the Mother in the European and New York City premieres of Meredith Monk's opera *Atlas* to Mozart's *Requiem* in Carnegie Hall, and take her across the United States and Europe in solo recitals, chamber music concerts and orchestral appearances.

In recent seasons Ms. Schadeberg has performed in Spoleto, Italy, in Riga, Latvia, and in Caracas, Venezuela, as well as in concerts and recordings from Boston to Santa Barbara. Ms. Schadeberg has recorded for CRI, Opus One, Bridge, Orion Master Recordings, New World Records, and MCA Classics.

Tenor DAVID PELTON, a graduate of Cornell University, the New England Conservatory of Music, and the College Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, is currently Director of Choral Music and Assistant Professor of Music at Providence College. As a tenor, he has performed contemporary music, opera, and *lieder* extensively in the United States and abroad, and is known for his interpretations of King George III in P. Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, and Frankenstein in M. K. Gruber's *Frankenstein!!!*, which he has performed in such cities as Richmond, Dallas, Austin, Cincinnati, Fort Worth, Colorado Springs, and Honolulu. Mr. Pelton is scheduled to appear in the May, 1995 production of *Memoirs of Uliana Rooney* in Dallas.

Soprano JENNIFER CABLE has performed throughout the United States and Europe in solo repertoire ranging from the Renaissance through the 20th century. She is a founding member of the Baroque chamber ensemble *Affetti Musicali*. In addition to opera and oratorio, she has sung with many chamber ensembles, including Tragicomedia, Musica Nova and the Kennedy Chamber Players. Her most recent prize was top award from the National Association of Composers USA Young Artists Competition. She received her undergraduate degree from Oberlin College and her Masters and Doctor of Musical Arts from the Eastman School of Music. Ms. Cable has recorded for Word Records and the Contemporary Record Society. She is currently in her second year as Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Richmond.

Soprano TAMARA WRIGHT, currently residing in New York City, has performed with a number of opera companies including Lyric Opera Cleveland, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, the Bronx Opera Company and American Opera Projects. This season she will appear in *Fidelio* and *Nabucco* with the Sarasota Opera. In 1991 she appeared in the American premiere of Judith Weir's *The*

*Vanishing Bridegroom* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Ms. Wright has been a winner in the Metropolitan Opera's Regional Auditions and a recipient of the Richard F. Gold career grant administered by the Shoshana Foundation of New York.

Baritone STEPHEN KALM has appeared with many opera companies, including Houston Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Connecticut Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and the Ashlawn Music Festival. Among his many roles are Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Marcello/Schaunard in *La Boheme*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and Pangloss in *Candide*. He recently recored Meredith Monk's *Atlas* for ECM Records. He is currently Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Montana.

Stage Director WALTER SCHOEN has worked as a professional actor, director, and stage manager for over twenty years. He assisted the late Alan Schneider on the Broadway premiere of Edward Albee's *The Lady from Dubuque* and his work has appeared at theaters throughout the country including the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Denver Center Theater Company, the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, and the San Diego Repertory Theatre. Mr. Schoen is in his fourth year as Assistant Professor of Theater at the University of Richmond.

Conductor FRED COHEN has been active since 1978 as a conductor and artistic director of new-music ensembles. Between 1978 and 1980 he was the director of Ensemble Nova in Santa Cruz, CA. He founded the Cornell Contemporary Ensemble and directed it from 1982 to 1986, and founded CURRENTS in 1986. As Artistic Director of CURRENTS, Mr. Cohen has championed recent American music, commissioning and providing first performances of over 30 works by American composers. As a composer, Mr. Cohen's works have been performed by orchestras and chamber ensembles throughout the United States. Mr. Cohen is Associate Professor of Music at the University of Richmond.



The CURRENTS new-music ensemble is an ensemble of professional musicians devoted to outstanding performances of the music of our time. Founded in 1986, CURRENTS has introduced concert music of regional, national, and internationally noted composers to the central Virginia community in formats ranging from chamber music to orchestral works to opera. CURRENTS offers an annual series of concerts in locations throughout central Virginia, including the Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts, the College of William and Mary, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Randolph-Macon College, and the University of Richmond. The ensemble has performed American premieres by such composers as György Kurtág and Alfred Schnittke, and has commissioned a number of American composers, including Thomas Albert, William Averitt, Jonathan Kramer, and Ben Johnston. CURRENTS made its New York debut in 1992 at the Katherine Miller Theater, and will make its first appearance on the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fast/Forward Series during the 1994-95 season. CURRENTS' first commercial compact disc is due for release in fall 1994.

Next CURRENTS Concert:  
Music of Morton Feldman and others  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fast/Forward Series  
January 21, 1995 8:00 pm

Next concert in the University of Richmond Dept. of Music Concert Series:  
Pianist Lee Luvisi  
North Court Recital Hall  
Sept. 18, 1994 3:00 pm