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Sitting with Kyle Gann

MARK ALBURGER

Texas-born composer Kyle Gann is also a musicologist, educator, and the music critic for the Village Voice. He has written books on Conlon Nancarrow and American Music. His own compositions reflect the disparate approaches to just intonation found in the musics of Harry Partch, Ben Johnston, and La Monte Young; as well as the discursive qualities of Robert Ashley's operas, the minimalist sensibilities of Steve Reich and Philip Glass, the earthiness of Native American musics, and the wild-eyed wonder of John Cage.

I lunched with Kyle Gann at a Thai restaurant in Berkeley, CA, on April 14, the day after his solo composition recital at the comfortable suburban concert space that is Center for New Music and Acoustic Technology (CNMAT - 1750 Arch Street), and directly following the composer's interview with Sarah Cahill on KPFA.

ALBURGER: Do you live in New York or do you live up by Bard College?

GANN: I haven't lived in New York very much. Right now I live on campus at Bard.

ALBURGER: How far upstate is that from the city?

GANN: A hundred miles north.

ALBURGER: That's a stiff commute to do your Village Voice reviews.

GANN: Yeah...

ALBURGER: How long have you been doing that?

GANN: I've only been doing that for three years. But for two and a half years I lived in Chicago and flew to New York to do my job. And then we moved to Pennsylvania.

ALBURGER: I think I knew that. Where?

GANN: Bucknell University.

ALBURGER: You were teaching there?

GANN: Yes. And my wife was working there. I've never really lived in New York, except for one eight-month period. But I had an apartment there from about 1989 to 1997, and lived in Queens most of the time. I've spent remarkably little time in New York for somebody who ostensibly works there.

ALBURGER: For a guy who, in a sense, is the musical voice of the Village Voice. One would think, from the outside, that you are a quintessentially Greenwich Village type. Yet here you are in all these well-nigh semi-rural areas. Does that touch base with your Texas roots?

GANN: Well, I grew up in Dallas.

ALBURGER: So the answer would be "no," there.

GANN: Yes...well... I'm not a big city type guy...

ALBURGER: I perhaps hear that in your music.

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: You're a downtown composer.

GANN: Right. Sort of.

ALBURGER: And the amount of Native American influence in your music, and the allusions to nature...

GANN: Yes. I've always felt like a Western composer, and I always felt like I'd end up in California.

ALBURGER: How old are you?

GANN: 44.

ALBURGER: Well, it's not too late. I think I identify with you in a number of ways, and one way is in that urban-rural dichotomy. The culture is urban, but there's something about us that needs the rural side, perhaps for our creativity.

GANN: Yes. Well, Bill Duckworth and Ben Johnston and I also see ourselves as the Southern composers. We all retain that identification a little bit. But Ben's gone back. Ben lives in Rocky Mount, North Carolina now. All of us have used Protestant hymns in our music and always had this connection to that church music tradition. It doesn't come up in my music much anymore. Some of my earlier works actually quote Protestant hymns as in Charles Ives. It's still a little bit like that with some of the American Indian music I stole, of trying to bring in a traditional element.

ALBURGER: And where did that American Indian influence begin with you?

GANN: That was real specific. I was trying to make music with different tempos going on at the same time the 1970's.

ALBURGER: A Nancarrow concept?

GANN: Actually, I didn't get to know Nancarrow's music until after that. I just knew the name. It wasn't until the 1750 Arch Records came out that I actually heard him.

ALBURGER: So more due to Charles Ives?

GANN: Yes. More Charles Ives. I was really into Ives and Henry David Thoreau where he wrote about "Marching to a different drummer. I connected that Thoreau quote with Ives and thought, "That's my thing."

ALBURGER: You had talked in your radio interview today about being not much influenced by your peers. That was another way that I identified with you as being "peer pressure resistant."

GANN: Yes. So, in 1977, I got a book called *Sonic Design* by Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot, and it had an analysis of the Zuni Buffalo Dance.

ALBURGER: Written out?

GANN: Yes, they had transcribed it, and I've got the recording. It was a common Everest recording of American music. That song goes back and forth among three different beats: a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and a triple quarter note. So the music is constantly shifting among these three beats. I had been doing all these wild experiments that had been a chaotic mess. The pieces ended up sort of aleatory. I couldn't coordinate these tempos. I had people watching blinking metronomes, and it was a terrible thing to make musicians sit there and watch metronomes. It was terrible! When I saw this Zuni Buffalo Dance, I thought, "There's my solution!" I could have people switching back and forth. It was also something that I could imagine teaching musicians to play, to go back and forth between different tempos. I thought, "If the Zuni can do it, then classically trained musicians should be able to handle it too."

ALBURGER: As in Carter?

GANN: Well, yes, it would be but... Actually it's the opposite of Carter. In Carter the notation will change, but one instrument will keep a perceived constant beat. I rarely change tempo, in the course of the composition, but the duration of the beat keeps changing. I had always loved the Southwest, anyway. I had spent a lot of time there when I was a kid. So the fact that it was a Southwest Indian style appealed to me a lot.

ALBURGER: You went from a fairly traditional classical upbringing to something quite other. Your mother was your piano teacher. She recommended that you listen to Lou Harrison?

GANN: No, Ives and Harris. Roy Harris was a real guilty pleasure for me. I had all of his recordings.

ALBURGER: So you are someone who is familiar with a lot more than Harris's *Third Symphony*. And by high school you were writing your own pieces.

GANN: At 13.

ALBURGER: And by college you had discovered the Indian transcription.

GANN: In 1977 I had just graduated from college.

ALBURGER: And you were at Oberlin. That was your breaking out of the south. Was there cultural shock going from Dallas to Oberlin?

GANN: It was traumatic. I might as well have been going...

ALBURGER: ...to the Zuni reservation.

GANN: ... from Montana to Bangladesh. It was awful.

ALBURGER: Did they make fun of your Southern accent?

GANN: Yes! I had been a very sheltered kid, pretty much. Most of Oberlin's students, at least at that time, were from Long Island, or Manhattan.

ALBURGER: A taste of your future life.

GANN: Yes. I didn't know what a bagel was. I had never heard the word. They thought that was hilarious. I didn't know there were different types of cheese.

ALBURGER: So there was a lot of general cultural catching up. But musically, I would think that you could have held your own.

GANN: Musically I was way ahead, yes. I was into Stockhausen by the time I got there.

ALBURGER: I'm guessing that at the time Oberlin's climate would have been more performance than compositionally oriented?

GANN: No, it was fairly compositionally oriented.

ALBURGER: Who was teaching then?

GANN: Randy Cohen was my teacher. He's still there. Oberlin has never allowed very famous composers to stay.

ALBURGER: Interesting. Why would that be?

GANN: Well... For example, John Luther Adams and Pauline Oliveros both just quit.

ALBURGER: John just quit? That's definitely new information as of the last couple of months.

GANN: Cohen sort of forced them into the position that they had to leave. You can quote me on that!

ALBURGER: And Pauline was there, too?

GANN: She was there every other semester.

ALBURGER: I sat down with John this past November, and we were reveling in the fact that we were actually outdoors and not freezing to death, given his Oberlin and Alaska connections. He, at the time, seemed to feel that Oberlin might be a continuing off-again/on-again every-other-semester situation.

GANN: Right.

ALBURGER: But no go.

GANN: No. In fact, I was there for a residency in November, and it happened to be the week everything fell apart. Students rebelled. It was an amazing political situation.

ALBURGER: Students rebelled against...

GANN: ... the composition department, because they were trying to make everything more conservative again. Under John's and others' influence, things had opened up. But they closed it up again.

ALBURGER: Interesting.

GANN: Well, that was how things were when I was there, too. Why Oberlin? It's such a good music school -- a fantastic music school! But they never had any famous composers stay there for very long.

ALBURGER: Somehow they make it hot for them. What about Northwestern?

GANN: I went to Northwestern for my doctorate. Compared to Oberlin, Northwestern was an extremely unsophisticated place.

ALBURGER: As conservative?

GANN: Yes. Hindemith was a big name. They hadn't quite discovered Stockhausen yet or any of that. That was all a little weird. Heady stuff! But Hindemith!

ALBURGER: Now we can talk! Well, how did you get the way you are, then, given this background? I'm guessing you set yourself on a path young, and you kept with it. Just as you were not overly influenced by your peers, you were not so by your schools either.

GANN: Well certainly there was nothing much at Northwestern to influence anybody. But I went there expecting not to be influenced. Peter Diena, who is no longer there (they denied him tenure) talked to me about uptown and downtown music. He really knew the politics of that scene. He introduced me to a lot. He took me to New Music America, where one of my roommates was Alvin Curran. It was through Peter that I met a lot of people.

ALBURGER: So he was a positive influence.

GANN: Oh, yes, Peter was very positive.

ALBURGER: Did that ultimately become part of your motivation to move in the New York direction?

GANN: No, the only motivation I ever had for going to New York was because the Village Voice called me up and asked me to apply for a job.

ALBURGER: How did they get wind of you?

GANN: I was pretty good about sending press clips to record companies. I sent them to a distribution service, and the editor of the Village Voice saw my reviews. When Greg Sandow left, and the next person didn't work out for very long, the Voice was looking for someone.

ALBURGER: Was that right after Northwestern?

GANN: Several years later. First, Peter Yates gave me a job working with New Music America.

ALBURGER: Which was based where?

GANN: In Chicago. And then there was a gaping hole in my life at that point, because after that job ended I had no idea. I started writing music reviews for the Reader. I spent four years as a free lance critic in which I probably made about \$18,000 total.

ALBURGER: That sounds like me now! So when the Village Voice called, that was something to jump about.

GANN: Yes, I had no interest in going to New York, but I didn't see what else I was going to do.

ALBURGER: You were writing music the whole time?

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: But, to this day, you've said that composition is the most fun. You didn't set out to become a music critic.

GANN: Nope.

ALBURGER: You set out to become a composer.

GANN: Yup.

ALBURGER: We have a lot of correspondence! The oldest piece of yours with which I'm familiar is on a Relache album. Is that a Zuni or Hopi influenced piece?

GANN: The rhythms of that piece are made up, but I later discovered they had some correspondence to San Juan Indian practices.

ALBURGER: Perhaps that's like in Bartók, where he became so familiar with various folk musics that compositions will have that influence, even when they don't have any direct connections.

GANN: Right.

ALBURGER: What's the earliest composition that you would still look back on as your first respectable "Kyle Gann" piece?

GANN: The earliest would be a piece that was originally untitled but was eventually named *Satie*, because it was based on various poems by Satie. It was a minimalist piece that was all on white notes, for singer, harp, and other instruments. That was 1975. Then the next was around 1979 or 80 -- a flute piece *Desert Flowers* that I like. In 1980-81 I wrote a piece for three pianos called *Long Night*. That's really the earliest serious piece that I still like to have played.

ALBURGER: You are a keyboard player by background...

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: Do you any flute background? There are a lot of flutes in your pieces.

GANN: I just like the flute.

ALBURGER: Partly the native American background?

GANN: Yes. And I had a flutist girlfriend.

ALBURGER: Another correspondence.

GANN: There was a time in school when I even wrote a piece for five flute players.

ALBURGER: The quickest way to meet five new friends... Coincidentally, I have a piece called *Flute Players I Have Known...* In electronic media, the timbral sky can be the limit, of course. In your electroacoustic works last night, beyond the microtonal fascinations, I heard a world of flutes, bells, and drums. I hear that also in your *Relache* and *Essential Music* pieces, too. Would I find that in your other works as well?

GANN: Flute is kind of a disease with me. I also have been pushing myself toward the oboe now.

ALBURGER: I'm an oboist!

GANN: The Proteus synthesizer I'm using has nice oboe and English horn sounds. I never thought I'd use as much English horn sounds as I have.

ALBURGER: When did you have that revelation that downtown composers have to do it themselves?

GANN: In 1986. I didn't write much music in the first three years of my Village Voice work. I almost stopped, because I was so involved in the job.

ALBURGER: That can happen.

GANN: I was writing all this ensemble music, and there was no way to get it played in the downtown scene. No one had ensembles, or if they did, it was only a group playing their own music. Living between Chicago and New York, there was no way I could start an ensemble. It took me until 1992 to compose my first real electronic piece.

ALBURGER: *Study No. 1*.

GANN: Yes. *Superparticular Woman*.

ALBURGER: Was that another old girlfriend -- *Superparticular Woman*?

GANN: That was a piece that I thought had country-western roots. I thought that if I was going to make a c.w. allusion, the title had to be either *Superparticular Woman*, *Superparticular Dog*, or *Superparticular Pickup Truck*. I've thought that I should have called it *Superparticular Dog*, because my wife has always been convinced that *Superparticular Woman* actually refers to her.

ALBURGER: It could be a compliment. She's *Superparticular* because she chose you.

GANN: Hmm. Very good.

ALBURGER: Was that your first country-western allusion?

GANN: Yes. It was a little bit an expression of anger, because everything in downtown New York in the 80's was about how music had to be connected to the vernacular. I had never really had a vernacular music. It was all about, "You've got to use rock in your music," everything had to refer to rock, and I never felt that rock was my music.

ALBURGER: Then that was a good choice for you to find something else. Paul Drescher, with his Electroacoustic Band, talks about how so many people approach writing for his ensemble with the notion, "Now I can write my rock piece," but, unless the composers have a rock background, the music can sound fairly insincere. So at least your choice of country music was something that was a little more in your ear from growing up in Texas. And where did that bass line come from in ----?

GANN: "Angelina" by Robert Earl King.

ALBURGER: Does *Superparticular Woman* refer to a particular country-western piece?

GANN: No.

ALBURGER: That's more just the atmosphere.

GANN: *Superparticular Woman* uses a country-western guitar sound.

ALBURGER: So this was almost a defiant knuckling under to the attitudes of the time.

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: You've written a lot about downtown trends. I'm not sure I would have guessed some of your personal attitudes from your writing. Your writing has always struck me as very well balanced.

GANN: Well, I'm glad.

ALBURGER: Of course, you're downtown oriented. In *American Music in the 20th Century*, there are certainly more downtown than uptown composers.

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: Were there other trends that you favored less than I might suspect?

GANN: The historic event that really excited me was minimalism, but by the time I got to New York, the free improvisation movement was really picking up. It was populated mostly by people who had -- not classical backgrounds, but -- jazz backgrounds. I felt it came out of another world. It wasn't the music I was interested in. I didn't really have anything against it, but I hated the notion that that would be the whole thing -- that that was what new music was going to be from now on. I really rebelled against that idea.

ALBURGER: Is that less true now?

GANN: Yes. It changed a lot in the early 90's with the Bang on a Can group. They brought a lot of composers out of the woodwork.

ALBURGER: Such as?

GANN: Michael Gordon, Evan Ziporyn, David First -- well, he's in both worlds.

ALBURGER: A second-generation post-minimalism. The free improv scene coming as much from jazz as classical is still a very strong component in the Bay Area new-music world. In your interview this morning with Sarah Cahill, you talked about Terry Riley being an influence on you in the late 60's.

GANN: Around 1970.

ALBURGER: And I suppose you became familiar with the music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass around then, too.

GANN: I didn't hear Steve's music until his Deutsche Gramophone recording of *Drumming* in 1973 or 1974. And I also got my first Chatham Square recording then of Philip Glass's -- *Music in Fifths*.

ALBURGER: So when you arrived in New York, much of classic minimalism was already over.

GANN: I knew that before I came out....

ALBURGER: How do you resonate with respect to the rest of the Village Voice staff? Are you of like minds?

GANN: Well, we're all sort of neurotic loners. I don't see those people very much.

ALBURGER: So we make our connections in the news through neurotic loners. So these avatars of hipness are loners.

GANN: Yup. Well, they all have the sense that they're swimming upstream against the culture.

ALBURGER: First you commuted from Chicago.

GANN: Then my wife and I got the jobs at Bucknell University.

ALBURGER: And that's about two hours away.

GANN: Three hours.

ALBURGER: A lot of time on I-80.

GANN: Yes. I was adjunct from 89 to 95, then I was visiting professor from 95 to 97.

ALBURGER: And then Bard College, where you have a college president, Leon Botstein, who is the editor of the *Musical Quarterly* and conducts the American Symphony Orchestra.

GANN: He's larger than life.

ALBURGER: Are there three of him?

GANN: People think so.

ALBURGER: Does he frequent the music department?

GANN: No. No, he doesn't. His philosophy is so antithetical to the tradition of that music department, which was formed by Ben Boretz, which is a very creative, wacky philosophy

ALBURGER: Ben's philosophy?

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: Ben was with *Perspectives of New Music*.

GANN: Yes, now Ben has a new journal called *Open Space*.

ALBURGER: Wow. Three music journals associated with Bard College. That's a lot of print coming out of a school in upstate New York. Do you have much contact with Leon?

GANN: Well, I'm the program annotator for the American Symphony Chamber Orchestra, and I do some of the program notes for the American Symphony. They hired me because I was a good compromise candidate, because philosophically I agree with the music department, but I have more of Leon's style of scholarship.

ALBURGER: So you have the head and the heart for the position. Speaking of Bens, how does Ben Johnston figure into your background?

GANN: I studied with Ben Johnston privately from about 1983 to '87, I think.

ALBURGER: In Chicago.

GANN: In Chicago and in Urbana. I would meet him at the Zen Temple in Chicago, and I started going to the ceremonies and just loved them. I had never studied with anyone famous, and I made the connection through Peter. I thought, "I love Ben's music, but I'm not going to get involved with microtonality. Too much trouble for nothing!"

ALBURGER: But the influence proved more than a little. Was there a conversion experience?

GANN: I wish I could remember exactly what he said. Ben never in his life tried to turn a student on to microtonality. But in my very first lesson, he made some comment about a couple of chords I had written. He just made a comment about how nice they would sound if they were tuned in such and such a way, and he referred to the tuning in fractions (I had been really, really good in math in high school -- I was president of the math class and got first place in district slide rule in Dallas). Just from the way he said it, all of a sudden this realization came down to me, "Oh my, this is my destiny." He wouldn't have even noticed anything; I was just sitting there and I realized from that offhand comment: "This is my whole life opening up before me."

ALBURGER: Wow. You were probably familiar with Harry Partch's music before this.

GANN: Yes, but I hadn't understood the tuning aspects of it.

ALBURGER: Did you like Partch's music?

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: But suddenly with Ben, this is when the door opened.

GANN: Yes, I had liked the sounds in Partch, but I didn't understand until then that microtonal music was a mathematically structured discipline. And as soon as I realized that, I knew that not only would there be interesting possibilities for my music, but that it would be something in which I could naturally excel. Working with fractions and logarithms was a piece of cake for me.

ALBURGER: In your program notes from last night, you talked about pieces that are perfectly in tune.

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: But, of course, to some laypeople their response can be along the lines of a perhaps apocryphal comment by Philip Glass referring to some of the microtonal output of La Monte Young and Terry Riley: "Sounds out of tune, doesn't it?" What would be your response to such a comment from a layperson on the perfect tuning?

GANN: It's a question of sensitivity, because we are so trained to filter out certain things. I have sensitized myself to the point where now when I sit down at the piano, I hear the beats between the frequencies.

ALBURGER: So there's a problem.

GANN: Yes, sometimes I play a chord and I just recoil from it! The buzz drives me crazy! The idea that I spent the first 30 years of my life filtering out a very obvious sonic phenomenon just horrifies. The amount we go through our lives intentionally not noticing. That musicians, of all people, should not be attune to the actual sounds that are around them.

ALBURGER: So when you hear these pieces in your own intonational systems that vary from piece to piece, you're hearing a music that is perfectly in tune.

GANN: Yes.

ALBURGER: So the answer to "Sounds out of tune, doesn't it?" is "No."

GANN: Yes!

ALBURGER: Some people are so accustomed to equal temperament that they react quite violently to just intonation and other pure intonational systems. It's almost a painful experience for them.

GANN: Yes, I guess so.

ALBURGER: But, by contrast, when you return to this imperfect equal temperament, you not faced with such a physical reaction most of the time. You can still live with that system for ensemble pieces, and so forth.

GANN: Yes, most of the time. More than 99% of the music I teach is in that system.

ALBURGER: So you better get used to it, pal!

GANN: Right! But if I can go through a period where I'm heavily involved in just intonation, then going back to equal temperament feels like going from a colorful world of Oz, back to black and white.

ALBURGER: Nice allusion. You deal with words and you deal with music, and you have some music in which you deal with words. I heard very wonderful settings of text in your music last night.

GANN: Well, thank you.

ALBURGER: Perhaps we composers who write prose deal with text in an unusual way in our music. It sounds like you try to honor natural rhythms of words in your music.

GANN: Well, I want to derive the music from the words. There may be a whole other tradition there. Perhaps the best American operas ever written were by Virgil Thomson.

ALBURGER: Another music critic, too -- another wordsmith as well as musicsmith.

GANN: Yes. *The Mother of Us All* is just fantastic.

ALBURGER: It's a great piece.

GANN: There's nothing worse, and there's no greater musical travesty in all of 20th-century music than the way in which most composers set words to music. The angular vocal lines....

ALBURGER: [singing in a very angular fashion] I won't argue about that.

GANN: Elliott Carter vocal pieces....

ALBURGER: Maybe it was a good thing that he waited until 90 to write his first opera.

GANN: He should have waited a little longer.

ALBURGER: *A Blessing to Us All?*

Alexander Nemtin: The Fulfiller of Scriabin's Musical and Philosophical Legacy

ANTON ROVNER

It is a rare occurrence when a composer dedicates a big part of his life to the work of another, and it is even more unusual when such a composer remains an original and talented figure himself. A worthy example of such is Alexander Nemtin (1936-1999), who in 1996 completed the great project thought of by his older compatriot Alexander Scriabin – *The Prefatory Action* – starting to work on this project in 1970 and completing it after 26 years of work.

It is well known that Alexander Scriabin towards the end of his life planned a grandiose mystically inclined composition -- *The Mysterium* – which was supposed to be a gigantic, theological reflection, the performance of which was to have taken place in India's Himalayan Mountains, intended to result in a worldwide transformation of humanity. Over time, Scriabin thought of preceding this grandiose cosmic event with a smaller theological work, *The Prefatory Action*, which was meant to prepare humanity for *The Mysterium*, which was to immediately follow. In the long run, Scriabin stuck to the thought of *The Prefatory Action*, which he finally began composing independently of *The Mysterium*. However, his unexpected death in 1915 prevented even his modified plan from being realized.

More than half a century later, the idea came to a young Alexander Nemtin to complete Scriabin's gigantic plan. *The Prefatory Action* remains a work as much of Nemtin as Scriabin. The initial conception of the work, the literary text, and the main themes and motives written down in disjunct sketches on 55 pages indeed belong to Scriabin. Though Nemtin followed to the utmost degree Scriabin's initial conception -- as well as Scriabin's musical style, manner, and formal and harmonic language, not to mention his orchestration -- nevertheless he carried out the project quite independently and in an original manner, creating a large-scale dramatic work for orchestra, piano, chorus, and color organ in three huge parts, which altogether run more than two and a half hours in time. When hearing this composition, one can immediately perceive that this quite Scriabinesque work also carries in itself original features of Nemtin's own personal manner of musical expression. Thus, by faithfully adhering to Scriabin's musical and philosophical intentions, Nemtin simultaneously expressed his own musical and philosophical thoughts and feelings in this grandiose composition.

Alexander Nemtin was born in the city of Perm in 1936. He studied at Moscow Conservatory in the composition class of Mikhail Chulaki. At the time of the beginning of his work on *The Prefatory Action*, Nemtin was already an established composer of two piano sonatas, two symphonies, numerous songs (including several song cycles), and other solo, chamber and orchestral music.

Piano Sonata No. 1 immediately strikes the listener with its impetuous, dramatic piano textures and mood, a complex compound formal scheme behind it as well as an interesting tonal plan -- the composition modulates simultaneously throughout the entire cycle of fifths upwards and downwards, resulting in some interesting polytonal harmonies, which greatly enhance and complement the essentially Romantic trend of the piece. One can also trace in the heroic, impetuous quality of this first sonata the strong, heroic will of its author, a will that enabled him to complete *The Prefatory Action*, overcoming all the innumerable obstacles in the way.

Piano Sonata No. 2 ("Irish") is a humorous stylization of a late-classical, early-Beethoven piano style, presented purposely in a very low-key manner; it was written around the same time as Alfred Schnittke's *Suite in Old Style* and in a similar manner, both pieces written during the revival of interest for early authentic music "on original instruments" in Russia in the 60's.

Also noteworthy in the composer's output is the 40-minute song cycle for baritone voice and piano, *The Stars Are Falling from the Sky onto the Earth*, written on the texts of 19th-century Hungarian poet, Sandor Petefy (a friend of Liszt), in Russian translation. This work, traditionally tonal and romantic in harmony and style, has an extensive cyclic development with several important regularly recurring leitmotifs. These themes are developed in an extensive, almost symphonic manner, extending the type of development present in many 19th-century art songs; the motives provide a great sense of unity and completeness to the 20 numbers of the song cycle (14 songs and 6 piano interludes). Another song cycle -- *Japanese Songs* for tenor voice, oboe, violin, horn, harp and triangle -- sets poems by medieval Japanese poets in Russian translation. Written in 1964, this work possesses a special textural and exotic flavor as well as an intricate lyrical quality, created by an imaginative combination of voice and instruments.

Other piano works of Nemtin include small sets of piano pieces, usually in two or three, the most prominent of the latter being his *Three Poems* for piano, written in 1987 and dedicated to the memory of Scriabin. These pieces, published in 1993 by Gunmar Publications in Massachusetts with the aid of Gunther Schuller, were in a sense written as studies for the work on *The Prefatory Action* at the time when Nemtin was in the midst of working on the third and final part of the Scriabin work; nevertheless the *Three Poems* transcend this simple function and manifest themselves as independent and original compositions, providing a contrast of romantic emotional moods, brilliantly realized in a virtuosic piano style.

Nemtin's output also contains a number of works for large orchestra, including *Symphonietta for Strings* and two symphonies, among which *Symphony No. 2 ("War and Peace")* clearly stands out in its musical and literary-programmatic importance. Despite the subtitle, the second symphony was not inspired by Leo Tolstoy. It was composed from 1963 until 1974 and performed by the Kharkov Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Gennady Provatorov in Kharkov, Kirov, Perm, Chelyabinsk, and Moscow. It is a large-scale dramatic work, in one movement, written in a weighty romantic language, combining extended, heavily chromatic tonality with sparse elements of dodecaphony.

An interesting phase of Nemtin's development was his active participation in the Moscow Electronic Music Studio, which was opened up in the 60's under the auspices of the Scriabin Museum in Moscow. The electronic studio had one single electronic instrument -- the only one available in the Soviet Union at that time -- which was called the ANS. The ANS synthesizer was invented by the famous scientist Yevgeny Murzin in 1958 and was named after Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin, a favorite composer of Murzin's whose musical ideas provided the necessary inspiration for Murzin to invent the instrument. The Electronic Studio in Moscow was an exciting meeting place, and many composers actively worked there and composed some of the first electronic pieces in the USSR, before the Studio was forcefully closed by the Soviet authorities in 1975.

Among those who wrote pieces for the ANS synthesizer were Alfred Schnittke, Edison Denisov, Sofia Gubaidulina, Eduard Artemiev, Andrei Volkonsky, and Stanislav Kreichi. Nemtin was an active participant in the studio and wrote a number of brilliant electronic compositions for the ANS synthesizer. *Tears* was included in the first of two records of ANS pieces published by Melodiya.

The subsequent phase in Nemtin's life was for the most part devoted to his work on recreating Scriabin's unfinished *Prefatory Action*. Ultimately, this became Nemtin's greatest achievement and took so much of his time, attention and energy that he had to turn down and postpone indefinitely many other plans and projects for his own musical compositions and his artistic career. Sensing the extremely grandiose quality of this project of Scriabin, Nemtin immersed himself into the world of Scriabin's philosophical and musical ideas connected to the planned *Mysterium*, many of which were present in Scriabin's literary text to *The Prefatory Action*. Many years afterwards, when he was on the verge of completing his project, Nemtin read the mystical writings of Elena Blavatsky, a variety of Indian religious and philosophical texts, and other related texts which influenced Scriabin's philosophical and mystical ideas. Upon reading, Nemtin confirmed in his mind the immense connection which existed between these texts and their realization in the form of the finished score of *The Prefatory Action*.

Many of Scriabin's philosophical ideas were written down by the composer in his notebooks, then subsequently, after the composer's death, they were published by his brother-in-law, Boris Feodorovich Schloezer, who also published several books about Scriabin's philosophical ideas. The first time Scriabin started to plan his *Mysterium* was some time shortly after completing his *Symphony No. 3*, and one could say that just about all of his subsequent compositions carried the function of a continuous preparation toward this project, which he did not live to fulfill. Even his *Symphony No. 1* already contained some of the important ideas connected to *The Mysterium* -- namely the idea of the synthesis of various forms of art, in this case those of poetry and music, as well as merging together the symphonic and vocal musical genres, as in the symphony's final sixth movement includes solo vocalists and chorus singing the *Hymn to Art*, a text by Scriabin himself.

Nemtin carefully thought about the details of Scriabin's plans for the creation of *Mysterium*, the grandiose mystical action, which was supposed to incorporate synthetically various different forms of art, including color-music (which he had already utilized in *Prometheus*), mime, dance, and theatrical elements, as well as nature itself. *Mysterium* was supposed to be a religious and mystical action, meant to result in the spiritual transformation and transfiguration of humanity into a higher level of being. The concept of *Prefatory Action* was in many ways similar to that of *Mysterium*, since it also implied the incorporation of various forms of art.

Nemtin also carefully studied Scriabin's poem -- the literary, poetic text for *Prefatory Action*. Scriabin wrote this text during the course of two years, a fact which many admirers of his talent lamented, since he could have spent this time writing music, especially the music for *Prefatory Action*. This text was published after Scriabin's death by his brother-in-law Boris Schloezer in 1919 in the sixth volume of the journal *Russkiye Propilei* (Russian Propylaeum), along with many philosophical notes written by the composer in personal diaries and notebooks. This publication also contained Scriabin's text for *The Poem of Ecstasy*, written especially for the orchestral work. But unlike this latter text, which was written after its compositional namesake was completed, the text for *Prefatory Action* was written before the work on the music to it was begun. The *Prefatory* text helped Nemtin immensely in completing the music, since he was able to follow the writing, treating it as a libretto to an opera.

As Scriabin proceeded to work on *The Prefatory Action*, he applied all of his philosophical and musical ideas to it and, after a while, the project entirely superceded that of *The Mysterium*, which was virtually abandoned. The main difference between the two projects was that while *Mysterium* was to have been an act (performed only once for the spiritual transformation of humanity), *The Prefatory Action* was intended to be a composition, which (notwithstanding all of its grandeur) could be performed many times at will. Scriabin's ideas and plans aroused a great amount of response and interest from his acquaintances and contemporaries. In addition to Scriabin's notes and his two literary texts, published by Schloezer, what remained were books and letters of memoirs by his contemporaries. These include Schloezer himself, as well as Scriabin's follower, Leonid Sabaneyev, who published a well-known book, called *Remembrances of Scriabin*, in which the conversations and discourses of the composer about his plans for *Mysterium* and *Prefatory Action* are written out in great detail. When Scriabin went on a tour to England in 1913, he made the acquaintance of some people who became interested in his plans, enough to express their willingness to assist him by many possible means. Scriabin's idea was to build a special hall in India, resembling a temple, where first *The Prefatory Action* and then *The Mysterium* would be performed. These plans all came to an unexpected end with Scriabin's premature death at the age of 43 from a sore on his lip as a result of blood poisoning.

At his death, Scriabin left the text of *Prefatory Action* and 55 pages of loosely scattered sketches (strictly speaking, there were 53 pages of music and two blank pages) and reminiscences of his discourses and plans for the work as noted in diaries and notebooks and in memoirs of his friends, primarily Schloezer and Sabaneyev.

Among the sketches for *Prefatory Action*, written down on the 53 sheets of music paper, there were a certain number of themes, recognizable as those which Scriabin later used in quite a few of his piano compositions. If one is to examine these sketches, one would recognize a number of familiar themes from such well-known pieces as *Piano Sonata No. 8*; four out of five *Preludes*, opus 74; *Guirlandes* and *Flames sombres*, both listed as opus 73; and two *Preludes* opus 67. We owe the very existence of these compositions to a contract that the composer signed with Sergei Koussevitsky, which required Scriabin to compose a set number of pieces in a set amount of time. Scriabin was obliged to write these compositions for Koussevitsky, but being so immersed, he chose an easy path and decided to use some of the themes intended for *The Prefatory Action* in the piano compositions.

The themes differ from the original sketches, since in the latter they were meant for a large orchestral composition. Consequently, the sketches possess a more extensive form as well as additional developmental features, which would have enabled them to be extended and developed in a more grandiose, symphonic manner. In the piano pieces, the same basic themes lack these additional developmental features. Since virtually after *Symphony No. 3*, Scriabin began devising his plans for *Mysterium* and *Prefatory Action*, one can observe that just about all of his late piano compositions, especially those written after *Prometheus*, are inspired by messianic ideas and the spirit of the forthcoming *Mysterium*.

The idea of reconstructing *Prefatory Action* first came to Nemtin in 1970, on one of the occasions when he was listening to a recording of Scriabin's *Prometheus*. During that year Nemtin made the acquaintance of an artist who was planning to participate in a film about Scriabin, and was searching for newly composed music which would incorporate some of Scriabin's musical themes, as he did not want to use well-known works by Scriabin. It was this artist who first suggested to Nemtin to look into the sketches and consider using them as a basis for a new composition. Though Nemtin chose not to write the music for the film, thinking that the amount of material involved was too large and grandiose to be used in a mere film, nevertheless he held on to the idea for his own independent work.

On November 8, 1970, Nemtin proceeded to work on reconstructing the sketches of *The Prefatory Action*. He started by analyzing scrupulously Scriabin's major piano and orchestral compositions, as well as the composer's literary text and notes, and the memoirs and reminiscences of his friends, most importantly those of Sabaneyev. Nemtin obtained additional insight and inspiration from the memoirs of his contemporaries (at that time there were even some articles in the Russian newspapers which recounted Scriabin's plans to create *The Mysterium*) and the general historical and cultural background of that time in Russia.

It is well known that at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia, the works of many poets, writers, artists, and philosophers contained a fair share of messianic as well as apocalyptic themes and forebodings. Such ideas were present in Alexander Blok's poems, the four literary *Symphonies* of Andrei Bely, poems by Vyacheslav Ivanov, poems and articles by Vladimir Solovyov, and Futurist writings by Velemir Khlebnikov and Alexei Kruchonykh. Boris Feodorovich Schloezer -- the brother of his second wife, Tatiana Feodorovna -- frequently participated in conversations with Scriabin about *Mysterium* and was fascinated with the composer's ideas. The Schloezer publications of Scriabin's texts include two variants of *Prefatory Action*, a preliminary version and an incomplete final version, which breaks off at a crucial point. Both versions demonstrate different aspects of the cosmological subject matter, and complement each other to a great degree.

Nemtin divided the plot of the text of *The Prefatory Action* and the music into three parts. Each of the musical sections is preceded with a quotation from the text. Unfortunately Scriabin frequently composed large fragments of music in his head, while writing down sketches only those cases when he considered that a given musical fragment was not the most successful and that it needed to be thought out and elaborated a little further. This was noticed by contemporaries such as Schloezer, who wrote that Scriabin played large musical fragments from memory. Notwithstanding this discouraging fact, Nemtin had to content himself with those few sketches that remained available.

Among Nemtin's fortunate discoveries was the new harmonic system of Scriabin, laid out in full in Scriabin's last completed orchestral composition, *Prometheus -- The Poem of Fire*, especially in its part for color organ. By following Scriabin's tonal-color system, one can easily determine the literary themes and moods which correspond to each tonality in the work. Thus in Scriabin's scheme, the tonality of C corresponds to the color red and depicts the theme of the will, the tonality of E corresponds with the color blue and contains the theme of dreams, while the tonality of F# corresponds to violet and denotes the theme of creativity. This discovery aided Nemtin in the deciphering of the literary and programmatic content of the whole projected work. It was possible to infer the mood, tempo, textures, and placement in the overall formal structure by analyzing motives in the harmonic scheme of *Prometheus*, in which all of the tonalities are placed in a certain coherent order of sequence.

Nemtin started his work by copying out all of the musical sketches, arranging them according to their respective tonalities and literary programmatic moods. This enabled him to determine the place of the respective themes in the overall structure of the work, as determined by their programmatic content. In order to determine the connection between these parameters, he wrote out triangles for each tonality, with its associated tonality, color, and mood.

Page one of the sketches contained themes from his *Prelude No. 1* from opus 74; page four and seven contained themes from *Prelude No. 4* from opus 74; page eight contained *Prelude No. 2* opus 74; pages 5, 15 and 20 contained fragments of *Guirlandes*; sketches on pages 4, 21, 26, and 31 carry a certain resemblance to the overall form of *Sonata No. 9*; while on page 6 Nemtin traced the harmonic chain which lies at the basis of *Sonata No. 8*. All of these fragments were used in the completed version of *Prefatory Action* with special attention to their development, as contained in the sketches.

Certain listeners, not being familiar with the peculiarities of the history of these themes and their initial role accused Nemtin of essentially creating a collage out of themes from existing compositions by Scriabin. Nevertheless, listeners who were familiar with the initial source of these themes perceived how they were used in the completed version of *The Prefatory Action*.

At first the plans for reconstructing *The Prefatory Action* were quite modest, since the sparse amount of sketches available suggested a new composition which would be 20 minutes in length, similar to *The Poem of Ecstasy* in its overall scope. However, upon studying Scriabin's literary text and starting to work on the music, Nemtin saw that the initial conception demanded a composition of significantly greater length. At first the idea was to write a single composition, then it evolved into a two-part cycle, *The Universe* and *Humanity*. Finally, upon finishing the cosmological first part at the place where humanity appears (the climax of the first part, where for the first time, in a highly dramatic manner, the chorus enters), and starting his work on the second part, Nemtin realized that the musical and literary events would not fit into two parts, so he came up with the final conception of a three-part cycle, adding to the already planned two parts, the third part entitled *Transfiguration*.

Nemtin conscientiously followed the plot of Scriabin's literary text for *The Prefatory Action*, treating it as a chief guideline for determining the large-scale form and overall construction of the emerging musical composition. In *The Universe*, the world appears, a result of divine play and cosmic creative impulse, together with all the living things, the plants and animals and finally the humans. The music emphasizes the initial creation with a dramatic entrance of a chord containing all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. The chorus sings the theme of death, foreboding tragic events in human history to come. The score of the First Part is prefaced by an epigraph of four lines from the second version of the poetic text from *Prefatory Action*, depicting the creation of the universe:

The heat of the moment sires eternity,
And illuminates the depth of space;
Infinity breathes with worlds,
Chimes embraced the silence.

The Second Part, *Humanity: Life Is an Illusion*, depicts the primary spiritual age of existence of humanity. The music recounts a spiritual history of humanity from an early, lofty state down to the dark and tragic events of recent times.

Towards the end of the Second Part, humanity's fall from grace occurs, humans engage in sin, wars, and bloodshed. The music loses its ethereal quality and becomes heavy and gloomy in mood, concluding in a grotesque, morbid dance of the fallen humanity. The epigraph is:

A new, unintelligible trembling
Embraces the world
In the reflections
Gods disperse their dreams.

The beginning and the greater portion of the Third Part, *Transfiguration*, continue the dark, gloomy mood of the end of the second part, depicting the continuation of humanity's existence in sin and evil. It is here that a prophet is sent to erring mankind. Staying aloof from society by hiding in a desert, the exile hears mysterious divine voices -- preaching truth and goodness, and commanding him to go to the erring humans and teach them the path of suffering and repentance. The music represents this brilliantly, presenting a "theme of questioning" (the prophet's asking the Divinity for instructions) and the voice of the feminine divinity, named as the White Sister (also carrying the additional role of Death) in a celestial, mysterious solo soprano voice, accompanied by a lyrical orchestral accompaniment. Receiving this revelation from the Divinity, the prophet goes to the fallen humans and tries to turn them away from their sinful life, through the path of suffering and repentance on towards a life of truth and virtue. The people do not want to hear the prophet's sermon, preferring to remain in their life of evil. They merely laugh at the prophet. At the end, when the prophet persists in reprimanding the people for their evil, they lose their patience with the prophet and kill him. This place marks the turning point in both the text and the music. Following this episode, humanity repents of its evil, gradually starting to turn back to its primary state of innocence and virtue. At the very end, humanity is transformed into a higher state of existence.

Following Scriabin's own musings as well as their sources in ancient Indian philosophy and religion, "transfiguration" is tied in with "evaporation" and "extinction" and there is a direct suggestion that the final transfiguration of the world is a passing back into the nothingness from which it came, which, according to the composer's philosophical cyclical scheme, is the highest form of bliss. The fragment of the text states:

We will be born in the whirlwind!
We will awaken in heaven!
We merge emotions in a united wave!
And in the splendid luster
Of the final flourish,
Appearing to each other
In the exposed beauty
of sparkling souls,
we will disappear...
Dissolve...

The music brilliantly describes these sentiments, after a final triumphantly transfigured coda, by dramatically dissipating, and the entire musical material gradually condenses into one F# (Scriabin's favorite tonality, depicting creativity and spirituality).

Certain aspects of Nemtin's completed version of *Prefatory Action* do not correspond directly to Scriabin's initial conceptions. First of all, Scriabin meant to set his poetic text to music. Nemtin dropped the text from his version, leaving the chorus and soloists with wordless vocalizations, though following the content of the text in a faithful, scrupulous and conscientious manner.

Part of the reason was to avoid conflicts with Soviet censorship, which would not have permitted a composition with such a text to be performed publicly, while another reason was the absence of a repertoire of vocal music on the part of Scriabin (except for the finale of *Symphony No. 1*). In addition, Scriabin initially thought of having *Mysterium* (and, later, *Prefatory Action*) last for seven days, following the Bible. The problem was that there would clearly not be enough music for seven days, not to mention the near impossibility of production costs. Nemtin gave his three-part cycle the dramatic and functional qualities of an opera with three acts and two entr'actes. He did not incorporate to such a great degree Scriabin's conception of "synthesis of the arts," and even the part of the "light keyboard" was taken on by Nemtin with some reluctance, since he did not entirely trust such a literal following of Scriabin's connection of tonality, color, and mood.

Nemtin added a few of his own philosophical musings to the literary and musical plot of the work, bringing some additional insight into Scriabin's text and interpreting his ideas in a new and original manner. Nemtin's interpretation of the ending of Scriabin's text is more akin to concepts found in the Indian Vedas -- while Scriabin's text ends with a passing into a new, ethereal form of existence, which would follow humanity's "dissolving in the air" (implied in the final words "We will disappear, dissolve..."). Correspondingly, the music, after reaching a triumphant, ecstatic climax, dramatically narrows down into one note, with which the whole composition ends. Following this train of thought, Nemtin conceived of the possibility of a perpetual cyclical recurrence of such "explosions" and "condensations" of the universe, which could be described as "the pulsating universe."

Nemtin was to a greater degree than Scriabin struck by the phenomenon of the incarnated force of evil, which, as we know, was manifested in many historical events of the 20th century. He elaborated to a greater degree than Scriabin the concept of humanity's repentance of their sins on a global scale, which, according to Nemtin, would be the only way of atonement and redemption for humans, as well as the only chance for humans to achieve any form of transfiguration.

Though Scriabin had occasionally dwelt on evil, satanic forces, and described them in some of his compositions (*Poeme Satanique*, *Sonata No. 9*, and *Flames sombres*), his musings towards these forces were of a rather abstract nature and he failed to give a definite answer as to how to overcome these evil forces. Nemtin, in addition, had a strong interest in Scandinavian mythology as well as Icelandic sagas, and was greatly struck by how the Norse gods and heroes, though fatalistically aware of their final doom, heroically opposed the force of cosmic evil.

Nemtin asserts that most of Scriabin's "late period" was merely an extension of his "middle period," and that the sketches show that his true late period was just starting. Scriabin died in the prime of his life, at 43, just when he had started to pass into a totally new stage of his musical development, containing a much more harmonically complex language than that of his very last piano pieces. If Scriabin had had a chance to live a few years more, his harmonic style would be just as distant from that of his late piano pieces as the latter was from his early style. Nemtin's assertion was a result of the immensely complicated harmonic constructions and elaborations present in the musical sketches of *Prefatory Action*, containing a fair share of chords consisting of all 12 pitches of the chromatic scale.

As shown in the sketches, Scriabin literally tried out virtually all the possible combinations of all 12 pitches by means of stacking all the possible assortments of major and minor thirds on top of each other. This further development of Scriabin's musical language, unknown to us until now, has finally received artistic manifestation in Nemtin's completed version of Scriabin's *Prefatory Action*.

The initial chord of the First Part is a very dramatically stated vertical construction: the 12 tones symbolizing the initial "explosion" at the beginning of the Creation. Despite the great amount of harmonic expansion present in the sketches, one can nevertheless trace Scriabin's persistent maintenance of the basic laws of his harmonic language. There is a "central chord," on which an entire composition is built, and modulations to the most remote "tonalities," which can contain 10 or more pitches. The concept of "tonality" in Scriabin's mature style differs from identical concepts in diatonic harmony. In the "tonality" of C, the "tonic" pitches can be C, E, F# and A. In this collection of "tonic" pitches, the interrelationship between the two tritones (C-F# and Eb-A) presents itself as a crucial element.

This new harmonic system traced by Nemtin in the existing sketches to *Prefatory Action* is also based on modulation through the cycle of fifths, but it contains a greater amount of climaxes and elements of polytonality and other more complex harmonic extensions. It was in these sketches from 1915 that Scriabin arranged all the tonalities in their final sequence of order -- according to the spectra of tonalities moving by means of perfect fifths -- and each tonality was endowed with its own symbolic meaning.

Nemtin frequently wrote down exercises in the harmonic writing of Scriabin's last style, and some of these exercises were later modified into original compositions. Among them, especially noteworthy are the *Three Poems* for piano, dedicated to the memory of Scriabin, written in 1987. Nemtin planned, upon finishing his work on the *Prefatory Action*, to write a textbook, a guidebook to Scriabin's latest style, in which he planned to demonstrate that in reality, Scriabin's real "late style" remains all but unknown to us. Unfortunately, these plans remained unfulfilled.

In Scriabin's music the development frequently occurs in patterns resembling spirals; it is possible to determine the beginning of one loop of a spiral, followed by the end of the first loop and the beginning of the second loop. In an analysis of *The Prefatory Action* which Nemtin made for the sake of performance, each of the musical motives and themes is connected with a literary subject from the plot, in a way resembling Wagner's leitmotifs (e.g., the will, creativity, humanity, matter, death). In this way one could analyze the whole score of the work in terms of thematic development and depiction of the literary subject matter. Similarly to the other two later symphonic works of Scriabin (namely *Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*), certain instruments stand out in *Prefatory Action* and are utilized to depict certain characters or moods. These instruments include the trumpets, the horns, and organs. In the first part the orchestral writing is deliberately thickened to give the effect of grandeur and satiety of feelings. In contrast, the second part is more inclined towards pure orchestral timbres. The overall form is created by means of a continuous succession of spiral loops following each other throughout the work.

During the course of their succession, the spiral loops create new thematic and textural material, which are organically intermingled with a certain amount of repetition of previous musical episodes. This form determined itself in the process of following the development of the literary text and also as a result of the wish to fulfill the idea of the spiral form of development.

A great amount of help in Nemtin's work was given by his first wife, musicologist Larisa Vladimirovna Nemtina (Semyonova), a Scriabin specialist, to whose memory he dedicated his finished work, calling her his "source of inspiration and co-author." His second wife, musicologist Julia Konstantinovna Makarova, assisted him in the final stages of his work and greatly enhanced the completion of the work. A certain amount of help was given by the director of the Scriabin Museum in the 1970's, Tatiana Grigorievna Shaborkina, who helped the composer in a financially difficult period of his life. Upon the completion of various sections of the First Part, Nemtin frequently demonstrated sections on the piano to Shaborkina, Irina Ivanovna Sofronitskaya (the wife of Scriabin's grandson), and Elena Alexandrovna Scriabina (Scriabin's daughter). Shaborkina helped promote the first part, by presenting a request to an appropriate committee for performing the work and by introducing Nemtin to the conductor Kirill Petrovich Kondrashin, who became greatly interested in the composition, upon his acquaintance with the score, and exerted a considerable amount of energy and enthusiasm for carrying out the first performance.

The First Part was completed on October 12, 1971. The Second Part was begun in 1976 and completed in 1980, while the Third Part took the longest amount of time, but was finally finished in 1996.

The premiere of the First Part took place in Moscow in the Large Hall of Moscow Conservatory on March 16, 1973, performed by the Moscow State Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Kirill Kondrashin, joined by pianist Alexei Lubimov, organist Irina Orlova and the State Republican Academic Russian Choir Capella named after Yurlov. The work was immediately issued on a record by Melodiya and Angel. Following this performance it was not possible to perform *Prefatory Action* in Russia for a long time, due to censorship on the part of the Soviet authorities, though it received a number of performances in other countries, due to the efforts of composer and conductor Gunther Schuller. It was performed in Chicago in 1986, after which it received a number of performances in West Berlin, Japan and Australia.

During the late 70's and 80's Nemtin was for the most part a persona non grata for the official Soviet authorities. Only in the 1990's was *Prefatory Action* heard again in Russia. In 1995 it was performed at the Large Hall of Moscow Conservatory, under the direction of Igor Golovchin, while on March 18, 1996, the First and Second Parts were performed in St. Petersburg by the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Alexander Dmitriev.

On September 1, 1996, the long-desired complete event finally took place. Alexander Nemtin finished the Third Part of *Prefatory Action*, almost 26 years after he had begun his work. Due to unusually favorable circumstances, there already was an orchestra waiting to perform the work and, after an intense three-week period of copying out parts, the Third Part received its premiere in Berlin on Sunday, September 21, 1996, when it was performed by the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, under the direction of Vladimir Ashkenazy. The same concert featured a performance of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and Ravel's *Scheherazade*.

After the completion of the entire work, Nemtin received some duly deserved success for his completed version of the *Prefatory Action* started to receive performances in many countries. On February 7, 1997 the premiere of the complete *Prefatory Action* took place in Helsinki, where it was performed by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of the enterprising Swedish conductor Leif Segerstam, with pianist Alexei Lubimov, soprano Anna-Kristiina Kaappola, the Singers of the Radio Chamber Choir under the direction of Timo Nuoranne and Kaisa Salmi realizing the part of the light keyboard.

The last performance of *Prefatory Action* during Nemtin's lifetime took place in Amsterdam, Holland on November 29, 1998 by the Amsterdam Radio Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Valery Polyansky, joined by the Amsterdam Artistic Choir Capella, under the direction of conductor Rob van der Poel, with pianist Alexei Lubimov, and Hakon Austbe performing on the light keyboard. After Nemtin's death, the Second Part was performed in the United States and Poland. The first of these performances took place on February 18 and 19, 1999 in San Francisco at the Davies Symphony Hall, by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Vladimir Ashkenazy, joined by pianist Alexei Lubimov, soprano Susan Narucki, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. The same concert featured a performance of Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 3* with pianist Radu Lupu. The second performance took place on April 16 and 17, 1999 in Warsaw, Poland, where it was performed by the Warsaw Symphony Orchestra and the Warsaw Symphony Chorus under the direction of Kazimierz Kord, joined by pianist Alexei Lubimov, baritone Andrzej Hiloski, soprano Elzbieta Towarnicka, and organist Jaraslaw Malanowicz.

In addition to completing *Prefatory Action*, Nemtin presented himself as a co-author with Scriabin in two other compositions. By a commission from the USSR Radio in 1974, he reconstructed from Scriabin's sketches a scene and aria from the opera *Keistut and Biruta*, which Scriabin in his youthful period began, but never completed past a few sketches. The text of the poem by M. Lipkin was inspired by Lithuanian historical chronicles, intertwined with legends (better known in Lithuanian as *Kestutes ir Birute*), in which the Lithuanian prince Kestutes meets the vestal virgin priestess Birute in a forest and falls in love with her. The premiere of *Keistut and Biruta* took place in 1976 in the Columned Hall of the Unions, in a performance by the Bolshoi Symphonic Orchestra under the direction of Gennady Provorov with soloists O. Klyonov and G.Kalinina.

Subsequently, *Keistut and Biruta* was performed several times in Russia and one time in France by Moscow's Helicon Opera with soloists Dmitri Kalin and Marina Karpechenko, and the score of the composition was published in a small run in 1984 by the Myzyka Press in Moscow.

In 1975 on a commission by the American SCM company (upon the recommendation of Faubion Bowers), Nemtin composed his ballet *Nuances*, a singular composition, which presents a sparsely and intricately orchestrated sequence of fourteen of Scriabin's piano pieces for small orchestra and "light keyboard," and which, surprisingly enough, does not contain the composition of the same name by Scriabin. Nemtin was recommended to write the composition by the famous American musicologist-Scriabinist, Faubion Bowers, to whom the composition is subsequently dedicated. The score of *Nuances* is expected to come out, published by Edition Peters in the near future.

Alexander Nemtin, who completed such a heroic task of bringing Scriabin's great mystical project to life, himself lived the solitary life of a prophet, hermit or philosopher, all of which he was in many senses. He had very few dealings with the Composers' Union of the USSR (and, subsequently, of Russia and Moscow) and almost never promoted his own music -- the latter was done chiefly by his wife and by his few faithful friends. He spent most of his time leading a secluded existence, staying either in his apartment or in his friends' country houses during their absence, and concentrating on his great project of finishing *Prefatory Action*. He had a very limited number of performances of his own solo, chamber and orchestral compositions in Moscow and abroad. His compositions were performed a limited number of times in the United States, including a performance of his *Sonata No. 1* by pianist Stephen Gosling on October 29, 1993 at the Bruno Walter Auditorium at Lincoln Center in New York as part of the *Bridge Contemporary Music Series*, directed by the writer of this article.

Starting in 1985, due to the efforts of his late wife, Larisa Nemtin, he has had a number of his compositions published by the Sovetsky Kompozitor in Moscow, including his two piano sonatas, his *Symphonietta* for strings, the *Symphony No. 2* ("*War and Peace*"), and the song cycle for baritone and piano to the texts of Sandor Petefy. His *Three Poems*, written in memory of Scriabin, were published by Margun Press in Massachusetts in 1993 with the aid of Gunther Schuller. As performances of *Prefatory Action* are increasing in various countries and as mention of him becomes more frequent in the press worldwide, Alexander Nemtin is gradually beginning to receive the fame that he deserves for his great musical endeavor. In the fall of 1999, a series of concerts, dedicated exclusively to his own solo and chamber compositions, took place in several different concert venues in Moscow.

In November 1999 a compact disc of all three parts of *The Prefatory Action* was released by DECCA records, carrying the title *Preparation for the Final Mystery*, in a performance by the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin, under the direction of Vladimir Ashkenazy, with pianist Alexei Lubimov, soprano Anna-Kristiina Kaappola, organist Thomas Trotter, the Ernst Senff Choir and the St. Petersburg Chamber Choir. The same CD contains a world premiere performance and recording of Nemtin's ballet *Nuances*, performed by the same orchestra and the same conductor with Alexander Ghindin at the piano.

The January 2000 Millenium issue of the Journal of the Scriabin Society of America (Vol. 4, No.1, 1999-2000) was dedicated to the memory of musicologist Faubion Bowers and Alexander Nemtin. It contained a reprint of the program notes of the performance of the Second Part: *Humanity: from the Acte Preamble to Mysterium* from the performance by the San Francisco Symphony, as well as an interview by Alexei Lubimov with Alexander Nemtin in Amsterdam. The full score of all three parts of the Scriabin-Nemtin *Prefatory Action* is currently being prepared for publication in Germany by Edition Peters Edition. Due to all of these efforts in promoting his legacy, Nemtin is gradually beginning to receive a deserved though posthumous success for his great musical achievement.

Concert Reviews

Sounds of a New World

ELLIOTT KABACK

Handbell Ensemble Sonos celebrates its 10th anniversary with a gala concert. June 3, Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, Lafayette, CA.

One of the first things that strikes the attentive listener at a Sonos concert is the sheer intelligence of their presentation. Recognizing that most audiences would instinctively expect a group of handbell-ringers to be no more than a quaint novelty, they come right out and challenge pre-conceptions: that their expressive range must be limited by the nature of their instruments, and that there couldn't be much interesting repertoire available. For this 10th-anniversary concert, Sonos presented a program composed entirely of original works either written for, or dedicated to them, and they brought along a chamber chorus, a soprano soloist, a gamelan orchestra, a Japanese taiko drum ensemble, and a kitchen full of assorted percussion to create a fascinating spectrum of sonority. As a measure of the impact they are beginning to have on the cultural scene, the entire concert was filmed by PBS, as part of a program which will be aired in January on public television.

The main reason for media attention was the premiere of an intriguing work, *The Navigator Tree*, by composer and computer genius Jaron Lanier. This work was the result of a commission by the White House Millennium Project, for new works by composers from all 50 states. The "tree" in question was a giant redwood that graced the crest of the Oakland hills until the mid-nineteenth century, serving as a guide to ship captains, until it was unceremoniously cut down. The composition loosely sketches the last day in the life of the tree, ending with its destruction. The 15-minute work begins with an improvisation on the Javanese suling flute and the Chinese harp, after which the exotic combination of handbell ensemble, gamelan orchestra, and taiko drums takes over. The piece unfolds inexorably in 6/4 meter, punctuated by ominous strokes of gong and drums. Lanier often exploits the different tuning systems of bells and gamelan to create some exquisitely delicate dissonance, and varies the dynamics (according to the time of day portrayed) by contrasting or combining instrumental groups. The nocturnal section, played by Sonos on hand-chimes, was mesmeric in suggesting the mystical, timeless presence of the tree. I am not sure this piece would make too much impression on someone listening to a recording at home, but in the large auditorium, with all the massed players striking their instruments in plain sight, the effect was exhilarating. Participating groups in this performance were Gamelan Pusaka Sunda (Burhan Sukarma, director), and San Jose Taiko.

Similarly, William Ludtke's *Y Después*, a 1991 commission of Sonos's for soprano solo, mixed chorus, two percussionists, and handbells to a text by Garcia Lorca, made a powerful impression. This work of only seven minutes feels larger than its length, capturing the contrast between human transience and nature's implacable indifference with stunning eloquence. Soprano Cheryl Keller, the San Francisco Choral Artists, percussionists Rick Hoffmeister and Robert Hamaker collaborated with Sonos to send chills down this reviewer's spine.

Elsewhere, Sonos displayed its almost casual virtuosity effectively in a wistful *Nocturne* by Karen Lakey Buckwalter, and Maestro James Meredith's own *Kodo Tryptich*, a brilliant display piece with a middle movement that could stand comparison with Bartók's "night-music" pieces.

Aided by Meredith's genial and informative remarks, together with a fascinating introduction to his own work by composer Lanier, the evening provided a full measure of aural stimulation and pure pleasure.

From Feldman to Felder...and Beyond

HANS-THEODOR WOHLFAHRT

June in Buffalo. June 5, SUNY, Buffalo. Through June 15.

June in Buffalo, the world-renowned seminar and festival for emerging composers at the Music Department of the State University of New York at Buffalo celebrated its 25th anniversary in style. The Festival was founded by Morton Feldman in 1975, to confront student composers with the works of eminent colleagues, among them John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, Milton Babbitt, Earle Brown, and Elliot Carter. Ever since David Felder, the Birge-Cary Professor of Composition at UB, took over the artistic direction in 1985, the Festival has gone from strength to strength. His ambitious goals succeeded: to give the young composers not only an open-minded environment and present them with the best instrumentalists for contemporary music to guarantee an ultimate interpretation of works by faculty members and students alike, but also to confront their quite often introvert campus mentality with the most diverse musical views. I vividly remember the years, when Vinko Globokar and Gerhard Stäbler, two of the most avant-garde and performance-orientated European composers, roused the students and even divided the rest of the faculty. For the anniversary David Felder invited an extended faculty of composers, who over the years had left their mark upon the festival. Sadly, Babbitt, Carter, and Xenakis were for various personal reasons unable to come.

But with George Crumb, Donald Erb, David Felder, Lukas Foss, Philip Glass, Bernard Rands, Augusta Read Thomas, Steve Reich, Roger Reynolds, Harvey Sollberger, Nils Vigeland, Charles Wuorinen, and Joji Yuasa all in residence for at least some days between June 5 and June 15, giving lectures and master classes as well as having works performed, the anniversary turned into an unique and overwhelming contemporary music heaven. David Felder commended: "The celebration of a 25th anniversary in a millennium year gives a special opportunity for reflection. The *June in Buffalo Festival* was formed in an environment of artistic discovery wherein composers and performers collaborated in order to find ways towards another expression, and has sustained an optimistic vision about the possibility of new music for these 25 years. Such longevity and commitment is unique in American music and merits notice and celebration. We look back to recognize many of the individual composers who have contributed so much to our program and also to our collective heritage in contemporary musical culture, while simultaneously presenting the best of their current work and their individual visions about possible futures."

This year, only 22 emerging young composers were invited to present their work in master classes and have one solo piece performed in concert, while 37 auditors had the chance to participate in all events. It marks a new direction for the future as David Felder explained: "We set new ground rules. We will concentrate more on readings of pieces and on performances of small solo or duo compositions by between 15 and 20 students. In the past we have invested a lot of energy in resources for works by emerging composers on a very high level. I came to the stage in my life where I realized that something else is needed, particularly in America. We have a lot of repertoire written by masterful senior composers, people who have been on the scene for a long time, which has not been played and not been heard. My responsibilities have changed. I feel more the responsibility to put this work out there and help the students in a variety of ways, and one of these ways is to expose them to a high level performance of those works, which they are not hearing. Other people, who want to come and observe, are more than welcome. Maybe there is even a certain comfort in not having a piece played as one does not feel as exposed."

David Felder's newly found responsibility was very much in evidence during the anniversary. His emphasis was directed towards the faculty and some late composers who had played an important part in the history of *June in Buffalo*. Only three concerts in the afternoon were left to solo works by emerging composers and one has to say that there was not much proof of a brilliant future. Merely, *Inner Voices for Viola* by Adrienne Elisha, the bassoon piece *Galapagos Lions* by Jonathan McNair, the third movement of Brook Joyce's *Piano Music*, (his composition *La Quinta del Sordo* for an ensemble of 14 players impressed during master classes), *Sequence* for piano by Moiya Callahan, and *Three Pieces for Solo Cello* by Michel Kama Galante showed promise and a distinctive voice of their own. Ten further concerts of all calibers from orchestra to solo bass were devoted to great music of the past and the present. It is impossible to mention all 33 works in detail -- their variety in style and contents was beyond all expectations. The Festival opened with an unsurpassed bang: the world premiere of the concerto for percussion and extended chamber orchestra *In Between* by David Felder, commissioned by *June in Buffalo*. Felder has proven himself many times before as one of the very few composers who knows the past, stands with both legs in the present and writes unbelievably strong, complex, but captivating music for a new century. To a certain extent, Felder reflects in his technically demanding but breathtaking way, and with his very own distinctive energy, the same kind of musical fulfillment for which Mahler and Ives were fighting a hundred years ago. This powerful concerto is dedicated to the percussionist Daniel Druckman, who gave the world premiere conducted by Harvey Sollberger, and to the memory of Morton Feldman, "my colleague and friend." The evening contained two further highlights: *For Toru* for flute and orchestra (1996) by Lukas Foss and Morton Feldman's *The Viola in My Life IV* (1971) with Jesse Levine as soloist. The three movements of *For Toru*, an homage "to a friend I admire and miss" are deeply moving and honest, whereby Foss describes the middle section as "a portrait of Takemitsu's delightful, witty, exuberant personality." *The Viola in My Life IV* came as a complete surprise to me, having never heard this work before. What a genius Feldman must have been to break completely with his stagnant time sense and compose instead the most delicate and sensitive love letter comparable only to Mahler's *Adagietto*.

Nils Vigeland, whom I only knew as a pianist and advocate of his teacher Morton Feldman, turned out to be a composer whose sense for balance, colors, structure, and wit whetted my appetite. *Journey* (1991/2000, with the versatile and harmonious piano duo of Helena Bugallo and Amy Williams and percussionists Justin Foley and Christopher Swist) as well as his string quartet *Aurochs and Angels* (1994, with the Cassatt String Quartet) left a lasting impression. The New York New Music Ensemble and Friends gave a fascinating contrast of various aspects of American music: Donald Erb's *Sunlit Peaks and Dark Valleys* (1995) and George Crumb's *Makrokosmos III* (1974) as well as the world premiere of *Brass Quintet* (1999) by Charles Wuorinen, Carter's *Enchanted Preludes* (1989) and Harvey Sollberger's colorful and energetic *The Advancing Moment* (1991-93). With Wuorinen, I have certain problems, his music does not attract me; contrary to Erb or Crumb, whose sound world is expressive and very human, the heart is missing. His *Brass Quintet* was well crafted, but did not touch me at all.

One concert was left entirely to Philip Glass, another to Steve Reich, the two icons of minimal music; Reich together with the percussionist Craig Bitterman performed his famous *Clapping Music* (1972) and Bradley Lubman conducted *City Life* while Reich controlled the sampler.

The Slee Sinfonietta and Guest Soloists presented three world premieres, commissioned by *June in Buffalo: Blizzard in Paradise* (2000), a short, but delicate movement for string quartet by Augusta Read Thomas; *Interlude* (2000) for flute, viola and harp, part of a series of future reflections and interludes by Bernard Rands; and *.brain ablaze.she howled aloud* (2000), another work-in-progress, for two piccolos with real-time computer spatialization and the occasional insertion of pre-processed materials by Roger Reynolds. The theatricality of this work was phenomenal dealing with the extremity of Cassandra's ways. Reynolds wrote in his note: "Torn by her Dionysian possession, she slips back and forth between prophetic ecstasy and a more lucid engagement with her real-world circumstances."

The most important experience turned out to be a first encounter with Joji Yuasa. His string quartet *Projection II* (1996), as well as *Jo-Ha-Kyu* (1994-96), opened a completely new, deeply moving and honestly searching sound world. In the later, Yuasa attempted for the first time to adopt the structure of well-known Japanese aesthetics in his music. "Yet, I intend neither to reflect the peculiarity of Japanese tradition onto the content of the piece nor let it support the piece." For Yuasa, his music is a reflection of his own cosmology. "Every person harbors cosmological polarities. On one side is the universality of human mankind, the commonalties we all share; and the other side is our individuality, rooted in linguistic and particular cultural differences, otherwise known as tradition." Yuasa started his master class by playing his concerto for violin and orchestra *In Memory of Toru Takemitsu*, the shortest 20 minutes ever experienced. It made one realize that even in contemporary music there is not only music reflecting the past, reflecting the time of its creation, reflecting a specific technique or reflecting the future, but there is also music of eternal depth and quality.

This Festival was worthwhile every second and I can only wish for another 25 years of exciting encounters on such a high level. May *June in Buffalo* be instrumental in giving birth to the music of the 21st century.

More Mavericks

THOMAS GOSS

American Mavericks. Salute to the Duke, with Jon Faddis and the San Francisco Symphony. June 10, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

American Mavericks. Salute to Lou Harrison, with Michael Tilson Thomas, the 83-year-old Lou Harrison, and the San Francisco Symphony. *Suite for Violin and American Gamelan, Organ Concerto, and Symphony No. 3*. June 15, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

American Mavericks. Steve Reich and Musicians. West Coast premiere of *Hindenburg* (Beryl Korot), and *Music for Eighteen Musicians*. June 17, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Repeated June 18.

June 10's San Francisco Symphony concert at Davies Hall, part of its current *American Mavericks* series, was devoted to the music of Duke Ellington. It had me asking just how far you can stretch the meaning of the term "maverick." With this series, rebels of every stripe and decade are getting their share of concertgoers' ears, many deserved and long overdue. But to define Ellington as a maverick brings a new level of meaninglessness to the word.

A maverick, of course, is an unbranded piece of livestock. The connotation here is that a composer so designated is not a member of the common herd, having rebelled and refused to be labeled. Yet Ellington, in his sophistication and sense of presence, seems to have been above even the need to rebel to feel special. Quite the opposite, for he struggled like many other greats, such as Thomas "Fats" Waller, for the simple recognition of being an American Composer. The irony, of course, is that rivers of ink are now being spilled to prove that he was the greatest one we ever had. As this concert showed, there is more than a scrap of truth to that assertion.

Ellington gets under your skin in a dozen different ways. He is like a pleasant itch, then a consuming fever. He knocks you cold, then massages your heart muscle to make sure you're still alive. He hits all the buttons, even the ones you didn't know you had. For the tuxedoed and gowned members of the San Francisco Symphony, the effect was more transformative than the effort of playing Varèse's *Amérique* a few weeks back. In order to interpret the wide variety of Ellington's art, the mechanics of the written score had to be transcended for the sake of the jazz between the notes.

Conductor and trumpeter extraordinaire Jon Faddis helped bridge the gap in disciplines and sensibilities with ease and distinction. From the first easy amble onstage to the precisely controlled fireworks which his gestures brought forth in the tone-poem *Harlem* to the Icarian high notes of his impromptu soloing, he brought a sure hand and an assured manner to the task of orchestrally realizing a fertile and free music. I came away wondering more strongly than ever why masterpieces like *The Black and Tan Fantasy* are not performed right alongside *The Chairman Dances* and Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*.

Faddis was assisted immensely by Renee Rosnes, who assumed ducal duties at the piano throughout the concert. Sometimes bandleader, sometimes accompanist, she showed outstanding mastery in the concert piece *New World a-Comin'*, Ellington's American answer to *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* [*Nights In The Gardens Of Harlem?*]. She got it just right -- flashy yet not self-conscious, sensitive but not overindulgent. By using the jazz ensemble approach, the work achieved naturally the erasure of adversarial roles between orchestra and soloist that composers like de Falla and Ravel strove so mightily to accomplish.

The symphony broke down to a simple jazz combo for the second set to accompany the San Francisco Symphony Chorus in a performance of selections from Ellington's *Sacred Concerts*. Though the chorus performed beautifully, their role was marginalized somewhat by the overly simplistic writing of their parts and the dominance of the vocal soloists. Perhaps this work of all those performed that night was the most deserving of the dubious moniker "maverick," for its effortless contradictions if nothing else.

Absolutely reverent and spiritual it was, yet gospel music it was not. Though touches of gospel informed the character of the work, the overall style was an unforced spectrum of Ellington's natural style, bringing the music of the nightclub into the chapel. The most emotive song, "Heaven," to which soprano Priscilla Baskerville brought a sultry dazzle, was a sophisticated, slow torch song that opened out eventually into a mambo. "In the Beginning God" was music for both the intellect and the soul, instrumentally intricate, then touching as Milt Grayson stepped up to the mike with his huge, warm basso.

The concert came to a close with the hot-step, fervent-shout "Praise God and Dance." Damn! The first time I ever really felt like rolling in the aisles, and I was up in the second tier, where such behavior is potentially lethal. I stood up and clapped instead.

For a maverick, Lou Harrison has a harmless, humble face. The joy of sharing his inspiration animates it, makes his aged, approachable features glow with boyish exuberance. A lifetime of creativity informs it, an intuition and craft of timing, wit, and intellect that carry forward his convictions and observations while he speaks.

Blow his face up to huge proportions and hang it above a world-class symphony orchestra on a giant screen, and it resembles that of a creator of worlds presiding over a chorus of angels, explaining in offhand and charming tones the cosmogenic task he is about to set them. Uncommon for a composer, he wasted no words in setting up each work, aside from a few comically conspiratorial asides and some intriguing history on the creation of some new percussion instruments. Archangel Michael (Tilson Thomas) seemed to be at times talking directly to the screen as they exchanged encouragement and wry banter, old chums sharing a moment of fun at Harrison's *American Mavericks* tribute on June 15.

But when Thomas raised his arms, worlds did come into being for our ears. Harrison has certainly lived long enough to discover what is inalterably interesting and captivating to the ear, and his highly modal approach to harmony when combined with a penchant for unceasing melodic flow weaved visual and sensual tapestries of sound. Narrative without being programmatic, descriptive without being cinematic, his music is a sharp lesson for those convinced that tonal music has run its course. After listening to his music, it seemed the surface had barely been scratched.

Yet Harrison's muse burned brightest not in the long, lyric *Third Symphony* or in the flashy *Organ Concerto*. It was under the fingers of Chee-Yun, appearing in her pink gown before the canvas blacks of the percussionists like a little rose tossed amongst coalsacks in a rendering of the *Suite for Violin with American Gamelan*. Co-composed with Richard Dee, the violin writing was on the level of intensity normally associated with concerto repertoire, with the distinction that there were few if any breaks for the soloist. Chee-Yun shared the stage with six percussionists, Thomas, and no orchestra, and together they filled the hall.

Chee-yun's playing in the opening "Threnody" was rich, plaintive and sonorous in interpreting this impassioned elegy, the gamelan ensemble making small but carefully poised comments. The effect was both moving and unsettling. The following "Estampie" showed another side of her virtuosity: brilliant, inventive and convincing as the notes literally stampeded along. The "Air" combined the best of both Western and Eastern musics as the violin serenaded the audience, first as gypsy fiddle and then as erhu. Even the perfectly balanced parallel double-stops skated this line.

The accompanying percussion for the most part served to interconnect passages of melodic dazzle, occasionally thumping along the side of the gamelan frames in a most unflattering whack. It wasn't until the third "Jahla" that the ensemble played alone, a soft dreamy melody like a little wind-up toy under deep water.

The concluding "Chaconne" maintained the course of blending musical origins, recalling languid impressionism in places against a starker pentatonic motorism. The slower pace halted none nor lacked any of the excitement which had preceded it. The six-man gamelan filled the sonic landscape with the presence of a full orchestra, if not its timbre, as the violin soared to an anthemic conclusion.

The rest of the concert was an equal, if less climactic delight. The *Third Symphony*, whose composition spanned a period of 45 years, seemed to encompass the wide and wild territory of Harrison's aesthetic. Long, lush melodies evolved and spun out over a slow-groove ostinato. A scherzo divided itself up into three overwhelmingly offbeat dance movements -- a waltz, a reel, and an estampie. Solos and choruses of instruments engaged in wondering, innocent discourse between powerfully stated declamations. A finale cruised with ceaseless flurry of motion and emotion, shamelessly modal, beautifully orchestrated with glockenspiels and vibraphones and the kitchen sink in the back row emerging from the sweeping bestringed texture.

The *Organ Concerto* opened and closed like the door to a funhouse; outrageous, funny, bewildering, with bent and wavy mirrors. The full array of Harrison's homemade percussion decked the stage, with oxygen tanks, square plywood boxes, do-it-yourself gongs and the like. Organist John Walker shuttled back and forth from white-key to black-key tone clusters with a block of wood in his right hand. The resulting tonal masses trumpeted in opposition, then in cohesion with the bash and crash of the eight assembled percussionists. This piece, particularly in its slower middle movements, broke ranks with the modalities of the rest of the program in a cherubic disregard for tonality. Harrison in the universe of his own creation is not unlike the creator of the universe in which he resides -- full of energetic surprises!

Minimalist composition at its best is a craft more akin to painting than writing. Organization of cumulative details involves obsession with color. Devising elemental patterns of rhythm demands an elevated understanding of line which courts the fractal or punctile. This approach was much in evidence in June 17's performance of Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*. Briskly reflected points of plink and clunk laid down a bright wash from a double quartet of pianists and mallet percussionists. Broad sweeps of pulsing texture cascaded through the catchy, slowly evolving cross rhythms. Rotating synth chords cast sharp shadows across glowing melodic rainfall.

The musicians were as tight as a welded bolt in this full performance of the 50-minute work, executing with non-robotic, fluid accuracy the unrelenting grooves and riffs. An element of suspense hung over the superhuman task of indulging so hypnotic and lengthy an exercise and not dropping a single cue. The warm center of violin, cello and two single reeds (doubling on soprano, alto and bass clarinets) blended well with the natural, open soprano quartet, whose vocalizations drifted dreamily over the chatter of mallets and felts.

The audience synced right up to the music, too spellbound to twitch, whisper or cough. By the end of the quickly fleeting hour, a mild virus of head bobbing had infected half the audience. Even a stray program which slipped from the nerveless fingers of the concertgoer on my right hit the parquet floor of Davies Hall square on the downbeat. The triple curtain call to standing applause which followed the gradual, subtle cutoff was more than a gesture of appreciation of mastery and sorcery; it was an acknowledgement of the suspension of moment in which we all had participated.

Reich's collaboration with videographer Beryl Korot, *Hindenburg*, received the dubious honor of following this tough act. Which it did with distinction, this so-subtitled *Documentary Video Opera*. Korot weaved a tapestry of images on a screen divided into multiple panels to the energetic and synergetic score. Flaming headlines and hydrogen marched across the screen to martial snare tattoos as tenors repeated in triple canon the assertion of the German ambassador "It could not have been a technical matter," the very title of the first scene. The ill-fated zeppelin crashed over and over, slowing in agony to the frantic, yet equally retarding voice of the famous radio broadcaster who broke the news live. "Mythic Stature" underlined the mechanistic nature of 30's German militarism, with flowing shots of marching soldiers interspersed with soup kitchen depression horror. The gleaming, full-color image of President Hindenburg jerked across the screen, startling the color sense of an audience settled to the black-and-white footage.

"Nibelung Zeppelin" borrowed a leitmotif from Wagner, in ironic homage to the system of ideals with which Nazi Germany attempted to imbue every aspect of their technological achievements. The music engendered mechanism of the constructive kind as silhouettes of workmen looped to the task of building the airship to chattering clack which started on high percussion and pooled out through the rest of the ensemble. The drone of the craft's engines served as pedal point to the eerie sung chords and slowly shifting harmony which accompanied "A very impressive thing to see," a short scene dedicated to images of the launching and sailing of the dirigible. Finally, the words to the title "I couldn't understand it" became the mantra which closed the piece, set to an insistently halting rhythm which called to mind the stagger of the captain who spoke those words as he crawled from the wreckage. Aerial shots lovingly panned through the charred blot of jetsam as the device of triple canon returned over a stretched announcer's voice. As documentary, it relied on subtext and inference to make its points, requiring an audience already aware of all the facts of the situation to truly appreciate it. As opera, the literal definition of the word as *works* was necessary to justify its use. No one got the girl or was cast into the pit at the end, but the smaller story of a clumsy disaster sufficed as story line to support the setting of words into form as music. But as video it was a remarkable achievement, and well justified the intentions of its creator to incorporate new freedoms into the medium of screen arts.

At the post-concert talk, the co-creators revealed to the moderating Michael Tilson Thomas and assembled audience that their method of developing the work involved setting a time-coded framework for each scene, and then working separately on the ideas, later meshing them together. They denied setting music to images or vice versa. To a seasoned film and dance composer, this manner of collaboration seems unnecessarily insular, as well as clumsy beyond belief. On the other hand, with results like these, maybe it's worth a shot. Maybe.

Theatrical Music

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Fresh Voices. Anne Doherty's *Dan (Destiny)*, John Partridge's *The Soldiers Who Tried to Kill Death*, Mark Alburger's *Sidewalks of New York: Henry Miller in Brooklyn* (libretto by Mel Clay), Valarie Morris's *Amsterdam and Paris with a Side of Eggs*, and Mary Watkin's *Queen Clara: Fields of Glory, Rivers of Blood* (libretto by Lawrence Belville). June 17, Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA. Repeated June 18.

This summer was a busy one opera-wise in San Francisco -- with three full-scale productions at the War Memorial, a Hartmann rarity at City College, and five music theatre pieces, given in whole or in part, by five local composers, by Goat Hall Productions at Goat Hall on San Francisco's Portrero Hill.

"Charming" isn't a word one would normally use to describe either contemporary life or music, but all of the works here had charm on their side. Anne Doherty's *Dan (Destiny)*, with words by the composer, for nine singers, was in the American populist style of Virgil Thomson's political fantasy *The Mother of Us All* (1947), with especially strong contributions from Douglas Mandell, Diana Landau, and John Adams.

John Partridge's *The Soldiers Who Wanted to Kill Death* (words by the composer), for three singing actors, billed as "a World War II fable of fatal proportions," got strong performances from Aurelio Viscara, Adams, and Mandell. Valarie Morris's *Amsterdam and Paris with a Side of Eggs* (words by the composer) was much lighter in tone. It was also enchanting and funny, and had three expert singers (Miriam Lewis, Tisha C. Page, and Harriet March Page) as well as a string bass (Mandell) and an accordion (Sharon Walters) -- Paris isn't Paris without one.

Mary Watkins's *Queen Clara: Fields of Glory, Rivers of Blood* (words by Lance Belville) emerged as a rather stentorian effort for four principals including Ruthann Lovetang in a blinding white Civil War nurse's outfit as the title character Clara Barton. This ambitious piece also had a chorus of seven conducted by John Partridge, with Stephen Cosgrove on electric piano.

Fresh Voices also included 11 numbers from Mark Alburger's two-act opera *The Sidewalks of New York: Henry Miller in Brooklyn* (words by Mel Clay). And though he wryly describes himself as "an eclectic American composer of postminimal, postpopular, and postcomedic sensibilities," his borrowings or steals were never obvious but integrated into something truly fresh. Alburger's piece was also a lot more entertaining and touching than Philip Kaufman's 1990 film *Henry and June*, whose only real virtues were Fred Ward and Uma Thurman as the title characters. Those roles were enacted here by the composer -- manic and witty -- and Jennifer Ashworth -- complete with marcelled hair, and with a stunning, well-controlled voice. She had stage presence to burn and was completely believable as the writer's troubled and ambitious wife. Landau also gave a vivid impersonation of Jeanne. The subtle and accurate pianist was Keisuke Nakogoshi. A good evening all around.

San Francisco Swoosh

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Tape Music Center presents *microFestival (musique Acousmatique [Rendered on Tape])*. July 29, 557 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA.

In the spirit of Nike (the Greek goddess of victory, as well as the shoe company), the swoosh is still an operating principle in the world of electro-acoustic music, at least as presented by the reincarnation of the San Francisco Tape Music Center in a three-hour marathon concert on July 29 at 557 Howard Street.

The *microFestival (musique Acousmatique [Rendered on Tape])* offered arcs and swooshes of natural-and-altered found (musique concrète) and pure-electronic sounds that ranged from delicate trickles to ear-deafening explosions. The intimacy of the venue (controversially dubbed "The Clit Stop") offered a dark, surround-sound womb of quadraphonic speakers to a packed and enthusiastic crowd.

Scotland's Robert Dow evoked a *Season of Mist* in rainy waves and coastal drones of Bachish cello, industrial locomotives, and pile drivers -- all adding up to a surprisingly lovely and varied world. Jean-Claude Risset's *Invisible Irene* brought haunting Varèsian French voices to life in gorgeous, reverberative, almost minimalist counterpoint.

Four English composers -- Matthew Adkins, Adrian Moore, Jonty Harrison, and Jo Thomas -- were represented in works rhythmically surreal (*Melt*), microtonally/medievally pianistic (*SuperStrings*), childishly playful (*Unsound Objects*), and uncannily beautiful (*Dark Noise*).

Two other Bay-Area auslanders, from Texas (Elainie Lillios) and Japan (Hideko Kawamoto) respectively, conjured up ominous mysticism in *Arturo* and ornithological missives and missiles in *Night Ascends from the Ear like a Butterfly*.

The Bay Area was represented by Maggie Payne's windyspatial Ligetian *Apparent Horizon*, David Slusser's quick-and-powerful *Kubrick*, and the sonorous bowls and bounces of Joseph Anderson's *Kyai Pranaja*. It was an evening of challenging and engaging listening.

Oedipus Tex in Wild West Marin

MARK ALBURGER

P.D.Q. Bach's *Oedipus Tex*. Dance Palace, Point Reyes Station, CA.

Sometimes a name says it all. When P.D.Q. Bach (a.k.a. Peter Schickele) decided to write an opera/oratorio called *Oedipus Tex*, much followed quite naturally from the naming. West Marin Music Festival's performance of this great parody took up every comic turn with great aplomb on August 18 at the Point Reyes Station Dance Palace.

Oedipus Tex. So of course everyone was wearing togas and cowboy hats. So of course there was country-western singing and fractured classical cadences. But this zany and excellent work, published by Theodore Presser in 1989, also includes a faux minimalist overture, askew syncopations, a cheerleading squad holding up placards of T-R-A-G-E-D-Y (even director David Ostwald got into the act, rushing onstage to correct the initial spelling of Y-D-E-G-A-R-T), ridiculous recitatives delivered at a podium (nicely done by Andrew Morgan, although according to the score these selections should only be sung in the oratorio, rather than opera, version), and intimations of '50's rock (in the aria "Howdy There... my friends just call me Ed [Oed?]"). A cock-eyed mustachioed Raymond Martinez was dynamite in the title role, belting out his lounge-lizard-meets-bel-canto refrains with a Texas-style gusto. His hilarious horse was a centaur-like combo of equine shanks and toupeed human head (alas the actor was not credited in the program). Even the props were bang-on, including campfire and mikestands all constructed in Greek columns.

Laura Stanfield Prichard was incandescent as Billie Jo Casta, in a stunning departure from her traditional concert persona. She seductively took the stage and torched out "My Heart" along with her son/husband ("I couldn't blame you if you said you hated me, Billie Joe, seeing as how I shot your husband and all..." "[T]he way I figure it, if you hadn'ta killed him, he probably would've died of something else eventually anyway....").

Elizabeth Amisano turned in a wonderfully thick-accented portrayal of Madame Bo Peep ("you're my kind of guy") replete with gypsy and mariachi overtones. The final Chorale combines a stuttering version of J.S. Bach's "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" with the tune of "I've Been Working on the Railroad."

And the moral of the story? "Don't love your mother, pardner, save it for your horse." What an impolitic romp! About the only thing Schickele fails to lampoon is one titular setting: Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Perhaps just as well. Maybe next time. The orchestra, complete with an obbligato horn part that grows from virtually solo mouthpiece to complete instrument, was conducted grandly throughout by Carol Negro.

Record Reviews

Abstract Expressions

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Earle Brown. *Times 5. Octet 1, for 8 Loudspeakers. Music for Violin, Cello, and Piano. Novara. From Folio: November 1952. December 1952. 4 Systems. Music for Cello and Piano. 9 Rarebits for 1 or 2 Harpsichords.* Govert Juriaanse, flute; Harry Sparnaay, bass clarinet; John Floore, trumpet; Arthur Moore, trombone; Teresia Tieu, harp; Janino Walta, violin; Gerrit Olderman, viola; Dorothea von Albrecht, Harro Ruijensaars and David Soyer, cellos. David Tudor, Christine Olbrich, Michael Daugherty, and Ton Hartsuiker, pianos; Antoinette Vischer and George Gruntz, harpsichords; Earle Brown, conductor. CRI American Masters CD 851 (65:17).

Music calmed down a bit when neoclassicism took the stage -- that is, until Boulez and a few radical Americans started questioning basic musical assumptions: form, for one, and content, for another. Influenced by Stein, Proust, Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Surrealists in literature and by Abstract Expressionism and the mobiles of Calder in the visual arts, John Cage (1912-1992), Christian Wolff (b. 1934), Morton Feldman (1926-1987), and Earle Brown (b. 1926) formed The New York School, in music. Their work evoked the porousness and randomness of modern experience, and each concentrated on time. Cage broke it up, Wolff miniaturized it, Feldman expanded it and Brown treated it as something both static and dynamic. A new CRI CD collects some of Brown's early discoveries. Brown, after all, invented "open form" and "graphic notation," and all the pieces here have the character and sense of freedom that these terms imply.

Octet 1, for 8 Loudspeakers (1953) is superficially form-less and time-less. Produced by Brown at the Project for Music and Magnetic Tape where he worked from 1952-55, it's made of leftover tape fragments. It's also one of the liveliest works of its kind -- squeaks, bleeps, birds, buzzers, bells and voices compete in a benign sort of channel surfing. Brown's famous graphic score *December 1952* -- often compared to Mondrian -- couldn't be more different, and pianist-composers David Tudor (1926-1996) and Michael Daugherty (the latter a former student of Brown's) give widely varying realizations. Tudor's has a Zen-like urgency, each sound being a complete world in itself -- delicate, stark, primitive -- while Daugherty's feels "fuller" and in a way more linear. Daugherty also plays two other pieces from *Folio* -- *November 1952*, whose score consists of notes floating on barred graph paper, and *4 Systems* (January 1954), another graphic score written for David Tudor.

Two chamber ensemble pieces are also included here -- *Times 5* (1963), for 4 performers and 4 channels of tape sound, and *Novara* (1962). The first is the more obviously dramatic of the two and skillfully integrates and opposes live sounds with taped ones, in a kind of (mostly) slow accelerando and decelerando. *Novara* is subtler, but even wilder, with sudden, surprising and very beautiful unisons -- a Brown trademark -- and moments where a sort of clockwork clicking occurs, along with "unconscious" quotes from Stravinsky.

The remaining pieces on the CD are for smaller forces -- *Music for Violin, Cello and Piano* (1952), *Music for Cello and Piano* (1954-55) and *9 Rarebits for 1 or 2 Harpsichords* (1965), and all have varied shapes and densities, the first delicate yet mercurial, the second more aggressively enacted. Brown's harpsichord piece sounds like not one but two kittens on the keys having a great time creating a ruckus, or like two Scarlattis dropped into the 20th century. This is a spectacular realization of Brown's dream of making the time of composing and the time of performing one, with no lag between. The other performances are just as alert and imaginative.

Book Review

British American Symphony

SABINE FEISST

Neil Butterworth. *The American Symphony*. Aldershot, United Kingdom, and Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate, 1998 [xii, 338 pp. ISBN 1 85928 459 0. \$59.95].

Neil Butterworth, a prolific British author, composer and broadcaster, has applied himself to a hitherto neglected, yet promising and challenging project focusing on the wealth of symphonies written by American composers since the late 18th century. To some extent prompted by the foundation of numerous American symphony orchestras at the turn of the century, most American symphonies were written in the 20th century at a time when most European composers after Mahler (with the exception of Scandinavia, Great Britain and East Europe) had turned away from this genre. Since many historiographic treatments of Western 20th-century music ignore this seemingly conservative phenomenon of the American Symphony, Butterworth helps to correct a distorted view and fill an important gap. His text is organized in 20 chapters, occasionally illustrated with musical examples and embellished with fifteen glossy photo portraits. The book, however, is basically a listener's guide. After providing a brief overview of America's musical beginnings from the Pilgrim Fathers through the 19th century, Butterworth draws attention to significant symphonies such as Walter Piston's *Fourth* and *Sixth*, Howard Hanson's *Second*, Roy Harris's *Third*, Samuel Barber's *First*, William Schuman's *Third*, and Leonard Bernstein's *First* ("*Jeremiah*"). Aiming at a comprehensive reference book at the same time, he incorporates into his text as many composers and works as possible, from John Christopher Moller (1755-1803), whose *Sinfonia* (1793) was probably the first symphony composed in America, through Daniel Asia (b. 1953) who completed his *Fourth Symphony* in 1994. He has zealously compiled a 100-page catalogue of over 1000 composers enumerating each of their symphonies, including Harry Hewitt's 36 and Alan Hovhaness's 67 contributions to this genre. He also includes a comprehensive discography.

Butterworth's approach, however, is problematical. Avoiding a definition of the ambiguous term "symphony," he bases his book on works that though titled "symphonies," often stray away from the symphony's traditional features. Gloria Coates's *Music for Open Strings*, for instance, is included, since she later considered the piece her first symphony. Since Hovhaness entitled almost any of his large-scale works "symphony," he appears as America's most prolific symphonist. On the other hand, many extended works for orchestra, symphonic poems and symphonic jazz have been omitted, because they lack symphonic numbering and did not fit the conventional three- or four-movement concept. Furthermore Butterworth's interpretation of "American" seems inconsistent, for he includes symphonies by Americans born outside the United States such as Erich I. Kahn, Ernst Krenek, and Ernst Toch, but completely omits symphonies composed in the United States by adopted Americans such as Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Paul Hindemith.

Butterworth's treatment of this topic is in some respects also questionable. Covering such a vast field and claiming to be "objective and proportionate to the artistic achievements" of the composers in question, Butterworth has made quite subjective choices as to which composer and work deserve close examination, brief mention or omission. Paine, Ives, Copland, Piston, Hanson, Harris, Barber, Schuman and Bernstein each receive chapters of their own. All other composers are packed into group chapters such as "Elder Statesmen" (Virgil Thomson, Randall Thompson, Henry Cowell), "Serialism and Beyond" (Wallingford Riegger, Roger Sessions, John Becker, Ben Weber, Elliott Carter), "The American Spirit" (George Antheil, Paul Creston, Irving Fine, David Diamond, Lukas Foss) or "Eastern Influences" (Hovhaness, Lou Harrison, Richard Yardumian, Vazgen Muradian). Within these group chapters, for instance, seven of Cowell's 21 symphonies are given one page, similarly Carter's symphonic oeuvre receives not more than a page, Weber's only a paragraph. Important pieces like Sessions's *First Symphony* are allotted two paragraphs. Harold Shapero's highly praised *Symphony for Classical Orchestra* is not touched upon. Interesting major figures like Henry Brant, George Perle, Roger Reynolds, Leo Sowerby, Alan Stout, Charles Wuorinen, Glenn Branca, or Aaron Kernis were not considered.

Doubtless Butterworth seems to favor conservative and accessible works to the disadvantage of experimental, serial, and recent innovative compositions. However, his detailed treatment of about 20 individual pieces provides analytical descriptions, plentiful quotations from record liner notes (often by the composers), and reviews, whose precise source unfortunately is often omitted. Sometimes Butterworth draws strange or vague conclusions such as the following: "[Anton Philipp] Heinrich had chosen American subjects for his grandiose orchestral works, but they remained stubbornly European in musical idiom" (p. 21). He characterizes other pieces as "less Germanic" (p. 26), "devoid of any Teutonic gloom" (p. 27), "pure Americana" (p. 64), or "the essence of America" (p.132) without explaining why these subjective descriptions apply. One easily disagrees with such blanket assertions as "Anti-German feeling aroused by the First World War diminished the dominance of European music throughout America." (p. 26). Or "the post-Second World War revival of interest in the 12-note system which swept Europe again had only a marginal effect in the United States." (p. 93). However, most symphonies are presented without any commentaries or are only touched upon. Butterworth merely gives their date of composition, premiere date, instrumentation and number of movements. When such information is mechanically strung together, one wishes for more reflection, a more precisely defined context, and helpful references and footnotes. The bibliography for such a vast topic consists of less than four pages.

With *The American Symphony*, Butterworth attempts to fill a long-felt need. But his book leaves both listeners and scholars not quite satisfied. Listeners focus on a limited number of detailed descriptions and turn away from the encyclopedically assembled data. Scholars miss precision, references, thoughtful analysis and find fault with a number of misspellings and factual mistakes (for instance, p. 6: Ives lost his father at age 20 not 10; p. 99-100: Becker's *Symphonia brevis* was premiered not in 1958, but in 1937, by the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra under the composer) and indeed *was* published in 1971. Nevertheless *The American Symphony* is based on a great deal of research, most obvious in the gigantic works catalogue that takes up a third of the whole publication. It provides information that is as heterogeneous as the sources it draws upon, yet information that for the most part is not to be found in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* or *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*. Despite its shortcomings *The American Symphony* will be a useful reference tool.

Calendar

October 1

Thomas Schultz performs Schoenberg's *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Galina Ustvolskaya's *Sonata No. 6*, and "Etude VIII" and "XXIII" from John Cage's *Etudes Australes* (1970). Dinkelspiel Auditorium, Stanford University, CA.

Chen Yi's *Duo Ye*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

October 2

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in Carter's *Tempo e Tempi*, San Martin's *Rhondabout*, Martino's *Serenata Concertante*, and Kim's *Now and Then*. Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco, CA.

Falla's *Suite Popular Español* and Berio's *Sequenza XI*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

October 3

Eighth Blackbird performs Lang's *cheating, lying, stealing*, Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*, Rzewski's *Coming Together*, Tower's *Petroushskates*, and Kellogg's *Mysterium*. Columbia University, New York, NY.

Composers Concordance presents Ligeti's *Etudes*, Lee's *Trio No. 4*, Hardish's *Sonorities II*, Kramer's *A Game*, Pehrson's *Stringing*, Chambers's *Endangered Species 2*, Lehrman's *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, and Hyla's *We Speak Etruscan*. Frederick Loewe Theatre, New York University, New York, NY.

64th birthday of Steve Reich. New York, NY.

October 4

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Mahler's *Symphony No. 7*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Premiere of Glass's *Symphony No. 5*. BAM, New York, NY.

October 5

Z Program 8 (Infinity), with Pamela Z, Miya Masaoka, and The Qube Chix. Z's *Endless Loop* and *Gaijin*, The Qube Chix's *Bald Boyfriend* and *Information*. Theater Artaud, San Francisco, CA.

Lynn Torgove and Kayo Iwama in Prokofiev's *Five Songs on Poems by Anna Akhmatova* and Hindemith's *Nine English Songs*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Tcherepnin's *Partita for Accordion*, Bernstein's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, Hindemith's *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo*, and Poulenc's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*. Keller Room, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Battey's *Uroborous -- Light and Sound*. Jack Straw, Seattle, WA.

October 6

Chen Yi's *Fiddle Suite* performed by the Singapore Symphony. Singapore. Through November 11, Lucerne, Switzerland.

October 7

Premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA. Through October 28.

A Concert in Honor of David Diamond's 85th Birthday. *Piano Trio*, *Perpetual Motion*, *Canticle*, *Violin Sonata No. 1*, and *Cello Sonata No. 2*. Merkin Concert Hall, San Francisco, CA.

October 8

Patti Deuter in Debussy's *Pour Le Piano* and *La Plus Que Lente*, and Poulenc's *Nocturnes*. Melissa Smith in Poulenc's *Trois Novelettes*. Eliane Lust Studio, San Francisco, CA.

October 10

La Rocca's *Credo*, Moe's *O Vos Omnes*, Wings's *Wishes Night*, and excerpts from Rands's *Canti d'amor* and Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Green Room, Veterans Building, San Francisco, CA.

October 11

20/21 Club: Renée Fleming. Columbia University, New York, NY.

Sara Laimon and Frederic Rzewski. Jazz Gallery, New York, NY.

October 12

SF Symphony in Kodály's *Hary Janos Suite* and Lutoslawski's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Chen Yi's *Eleanor's Gift*. Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL.

Ensemble 21 presents pianist Marilyn Nonken in Ives's *Sonata No. 2 ("Concord, Mass. 1840-1860")*, and Finnissy's *North American Spirituals* and *Kemp's Morris*. Columbia University, New York, NY.

Anthony de Mare and Frederick Rzewski. Jazz Gallery, NY, NY.

October 13

West Coast premiere of Glass's *Symphony No. 5 in 12 Parts*. Orange County Performing Arts Center, CA.

Weill at Heart, directed by Harriet March Page, with Mark Alburger, Diana Landau, Douglas Mandell, Miriam Lewis, and Sharon Walters. Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through October 23.

Experimental Frontiers: Cage, Feldman, Cardew, Young, Brown. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Katherine Supové and Anthony de Mare. Jazz Gallery, NY, NY.

October 14

C'est Poulenc!, with Patti Deuter, Melissa Smith, David Saslav, Anne Oliver, Elizabeth Lee, Michael Kimbell, Edmund Kimbell, and Kathleen Johannessen. Sanchez Concert Hall, Pacifica, CA.

Kathleen Supové and Jed Distler. Jazz Gallery, New York, NY.

October 22

José Maceda. Mills College, Oakland, CA.

October 15

Works of JJ Hollingsworth, Max Simoncic, Thomas Goss, and Alexis Alrich, performed by Bay Brass. Old First, San Francisco, CA.

October 23

77th birthday of Ned Rorem.

October 16

Left Coast Ensemble in Zhou Long's *Spirit of the Chimes* and Chen Yi's *Sound of the Five*. Veterans Building, San Francisco, CA.

Earplay performs Torakai's *Fuse VII*, Blumberg's *Daedalus and Icarus*, Mamlok's *Polarities*, Berger's *in this month are simples gathered*, Dugger's *On Spring's Eve*, and Eckardt's *Echoes' White Veil*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

John Zorn presents *Music of Masada*. Merkin Hall, New York, NY.

October 24

October 17

Cygnus Ensemble in Scelsi's *Rucke di Gucke*, *L'Ame Aillée*, *Sori*, and *Violin and Cello Duo*, Donatoni's *Guitar Solo*, and Morris's *Guitar Duo*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

Patti Monson in Bresnick's *Conspiracies*, Dick's *Afterlight*, Higdon's *Rapid Fire*, Meltzer's *Rumors*, and Reich's *Vermont Counterpoint*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

October 18

Alea II presents *champd, action*. Stanford University, CA.

October 25

Cogan's *Aflame in Flight* and *Eight Poems of William Bronco: "Beyond" Version*, Crawford's *Diaphonic Suites No. 2 and No. 4*, and Escot's *Visione*⁸⁷. New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

San Francisco Symphony in Holst's *The Planets* and Messiaen's *Les Offrandes Oubliées*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

NEC Chorus in Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

October 19

San Francisco Symphony in Britten's *Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes* and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 10*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

October 26

Core Ensemble in Kernis's *Air for Cello and Piano* and the premiere of Baley's *New Trio*. Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN.

All-Copland Piano Recital. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA.

NEC Wind Ensemble in Ligeti's *Sechs Miniaturen für Bläser*, Grainger's arrangements of Debussy's *Bruyères* and *Pagodas*, and Schoenberg's *Theme and Variations*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

NEC Jordan Winds in Jones's *Sketches from Middle Earth*, and the Stucky arrangement of Purcell's *Funeral Music for Queen Mary*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

October 20

Throatsinging Competition Festival. First Congregational Church, Berkeley, CA. Through October 21.

October 27

73rd birthday of Dominick Argento.

Musicians and Politics: Cultural Revolutions of the 20th Century. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

New Music 101 presents Stockhausen's *Lucifer's Dream* and Kagel's *Oral Treason: A History of the Devil*. College of Marin, Kentfield, CA.

Kurt Weill's *Lady in the Dark*. BAM, New York, NY.

Aaron Kernis's *Symphony No. 2* performed by the Louisville Orchestra. Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN.

October 21

Hamza El Din, W.A. Mathieu, Joan Jeanrenaud, Terry Riley, and Devi Mathieu. Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, CA.

Absolute Ensemble in *Scratchband*, music of The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, John Adams, Miles Davis, Steve Reich, and Marc Anthony Turnage. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

Ursula Oppens and Aki Takahashi in Richard Teitelbaum's *...dal Niente...*, Ligeti's *Three Pieces*, and Lutoslawski's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*. Mills College, Oakland, CA.

October 28

Eugene Kim in Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello*. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

The American Chamber Ensemble in Krein's *Esquisses Hebraique*, Engel's *First Suite*, Weinberg's *Grandmother's Stories* and *The Maypole*, Schiff's *Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool*, Shostakovich's *Trio in E Minor*, and Prokofiev's *Overture on Hebrew Themes*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

Chronicle

August 3

Michael Nyman's *Facing Goya*. Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

August 4

90th anniversary of the birth of William Schuman.

Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*. Civic Auditorium, Santa Cruz, CA. Repeated August 5.

August 6

California premiere of Christopher Rouse's *Der gerettete Alberich*. Civic Auditorium, Santa Cruz, CA.

August 9

25th anniversary of the death of Dmitri Shostakovich.

66th birthday of Peter Maxwell Davies.

August 11

Christopher Rouse's *Concert de Gaudi*. Aspen, CO.

August 12

Kurt Weill's *Marie Galante* and *Lost in the Stars*, and Christopher Rouse's *Symphony No. 1*. Civic Auditorium, Santa Cruz, CA.

August 13

North American premiere of James MacMillan's *Triduum*. Mission, San Juan Bautista, CA.

August 15

78th birthday of Lukas Foss.

Steve Mackey's *Micro-concerto*. Harris Concert Hall, Aspen, CO.

August 16

Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Aspen, CO.

August 17

Deep Listening Day. Lincoln Center, New York, NY.

August 18

P.D.Q. Bach's *Oedipus Tex*. Dance Palace, Point Reyes Station, CA.

Francis Poulenc's *Double Piano Concerto*. Aspen, CO.

August 19

Mary Lou Newmark's *Seven Sacred Stones*. KAJX, Aspen, CO.

August 24

Non Sequitur Festival, with music of Thorne, Distler, and Davidson. HERE, New York, NY.

August 25

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Copland's *Symphonic Ode* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. San Francisco, CA.

August 26

Two Fish Out of Water. Dave Hurlbert, scales, and Harriet March Page, gills, perform Alburger's *Arthur Rimbaud*. Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA. Repeated August 27.

Michael Daugherty's *Lounge Lizards for Two Pianos and Percussion*. Dance Palace, Point Reyes Station, CA.

August 27

Premiere of David Garner's *Cinco poemas de Jaime Manrique*. Old First Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA.

A Concert for Jeff, with Carolyn Hawley. Mendocino College, Ukiah, CA.

August 28

Premiere of Philip Glass's *The Penal Colony*. Seattle, WA. Repeated August 31.

August 30

Acme Observatory, with John Bischoff. Tuva Space, Berkeley, CA.

Writers

MARK ALBURGER began playing the oboe and composing in association with Dorothy and James Freeman, George Crumb, and Richard Wernick. He studied with Karl Kohn at Pomona College; Joan Panetti and Gerald Levinson at Swarthmore College (B.A.); Jules Langert at Dominican College (M.A.); Roland Jackson at Claremont Graduate University (Ph.D.); and Terry Riley. Alburger writes for *Commuter Times* and is published by New Music. He is Editor-Publisher of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, and has interviewed numerous composers, including Charles Amirkhanian, Henry Brant, Earle Brown, Philip Glass, Lou Harrison, Alan Hovhaness, Meredith Monk, Pauline Oliveros, Steve Reich, and Frederick Rzewski. An ASCAP composer, he recently completed three operas: *Antigone*, *Diocletian*, and *Le Petit Prince*.

SABINE M. FEISST received her Ph.D. at the Free University, Berlin in musicology and is currently writing a book on *Schoenberg in America*. Her publications have appeared in 20TH- and 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, *The Musical Quarterly*, and *Schoenberg and His World* (ed. Walter Frisch, University of Princeton Press, 1999) and she is the author of *Der Begriff "Improvisation" in der neuen Musik*/Concepts of Improvisation in New Music (Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 1997).

ELLIOTT KABACK recently retired as Head of Collection Development and Music Bibliographer of Hunter College Library, City University of New York. He was for 13 years a critic for *Fanfare* magazine, and has contributed articles to *Classical Magazine* of Lafayette, Louisiana.

THOMAS GOSS -- San Francisco composer, writer, and pianist -- serves on the advisory board of the American Composers Forum (Bay Area Chapter). His cassette tapes, *Preludes* and *Night Fragments*, are distributed by New Music.

MICHAEL MCDONAGH is a San Francisco-based poet and writer on the arts who has done two poem/picture books with artist Gary Bukovnik, *Before I Forget* (1991) and *Once* (1997), the former being in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Berkeley Art Museum, and the New York Public Library. He has also published poems in journals including *Mirage*, and written two theatre pieces -- *Touch and Go*, for three performers, which was staged at Venue 9 in 1998; and *Sight Unseen*, for solo performer. His critical pieces have appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Review of Books*, *3 Penny Review*, *California Printmaker*, *Antiques and Fine Art*, *The Advocate*, *High Performance*, and *In Tune*. He writes for *The Bay Area Reporter* and heads the Bay Area chapter of *The Duke Ellington Society*. He co-hosted nine radio shows on KUSF with Tony Gualtieri with whom he now shares a classical-music review website -- www.msu.edu/user/gualtie3.

ANTON ROVNER was born in Moscow, Russia, in 1970 and has lived in the United States since 1974. He studied piano at the Manhattan School of Music, Preparatory Division, then, composition at the Juilliard School, Pre-College Division, with Andrew Thomas and the Juilliard School (undergraduate and graduate programs) with Milton Babbitt, graduating in 1993 with an MM. In 1998 he received a Ph.D. degree from Rutgers University, where he studied with Charles Wuorinen. Rovner received a BMI Award in 1989 and an IREX Grant in 1989-1990. He attended the Estherwood Music Festival studying composition with Eric Ewazen. He studied music theory at Columbia University with Joseph Dubiel for two years. Since 1992 he is the artistic director of the Bridge Contemporary Music Series. His music has been performed in New York, Moscow, Paris, Kiev, Lvov, Kazan, Nizhni-Novgorod, Chisinau, and Bucharest. He has participated and his music has been performed in such music concerts and festivals as the Composers' Concordance contemporary music series in New York, the Moscow Autumn Music Festival, the Alternativa festival in Moscow, the International Forum for Young Composers in Kiev, the Nicolai Roslavetz Music Festival in Bryansk, Russia, the 3rd International Contemporary Music Festival Europe-Asia in Kazan, Russia, the Contrasts festival in Lvov, and the Moscow Forum/Dutch-Russian Music Festival in Moscow. His theoretical articles, interviews with various composers and reviews of contemporary music concerts and festivals have been published in such music journals as *Myzykal'naya Akademiya* and 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC. He is a member of the American Music Center and the Composers' Guild of New Jersey.

HANS-THEODOR WOHLFAHRT worked with German opera companies as dramaturg and staff producer. For the last 20 years, he has been a freelance correspondent covering music, dance, arts, and artistic policies in the United Kingdom for German, Austrian, and Swiss newspapers, music magazines, and broadcasting stations.

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CMS Site Chair
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