

# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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# Micromanagement with Dean Drummond

MARK ALBURGER

Dean Drummond is a composer, conductor, multi-instrumentalist, music instrument inventor, co-director of Newband and Director of the Harry Partch Instrument Collection. Born in 1949 in Los Angeles, Drummond received degrees in music composition from the University of Southern California (Bachelor of Music, 1971) and California Institute of the Arts (Master of Fine Arts, 1973). While a student, he studied trumpet with Don Ellis and John Clyman, composition with Leonard Stein, and worked as musician for and assistant to Harry Partch, performing in the premieres of Partch's *Daphne of the Dunes*, *And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma*, and *Delusion of the Fury*, as well as on both Columbia Masterworks recordings made during the late 60's. In 1976, Drummond moved to New York, where he co-founded Newband the following year with flutist Stefani Starin. Since 1977, Drummond has been engaged in a multi-faceted career including composition, hundreds of performances, recordings, production of Harry Partch's music theatre works, encouragement and education of composers interested in new microtonal resources, and many educational activities for children.

I met Dean Drummond at his guest accommodations in a decidedly downscale San Francisco hotel on Saturday, September 25, 1999 -- two days after his amazing concert of Harry Partch's and his own music at Yerba Buena Center.

ALBURGER: Nice to see they're putting you up in such style.

DRUMMOND: Yes!

ALBURGER: At least the concert certainly had style.

DRUMMOND: Now of course it's a bit of a blur. We have performed some of those pieces so many times that I can't remember specific performances so well. I did think the performance of my *Congressional Record* was one of our best.

ALBURGER: How does your personal record begin?

DRUMMOND: I got started by signing up for trumpet when band was offered in 4th grade (Los Angeles City School District) and by listening to my parent's collection of 78's and LP's.

ALBURGER: What music was important to you then?

DRUMMOND: When I "discovered" Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, I was about ten and knew that music was extremely important. I quickly became interested in bebop and the innovative jazz of the late 50's and early 60's, also in Stravinsky, Bartók, and others.

ALBURGER: How did you begin composing?

DRUMMOND: I can't remember exactly how I began to compose. My earliest memory is improvising, pretty crudely, at the piano, and then trying to write down the best part of the improvisation. I guess I have always been an organizer and as early as middle school, I spent my allowance on jazz band arrangements by Dizzy Gillespie and others and attempted to organize readings. Since I could never assemble exactly the right musicians, I would have to arrange and transpose the parts for the instruments we had. That's another way that I got started composing.

ALBURGER: How did you hook up with Don Ellis?

DRUMMOND: While in high school, I chanced to see an ad placed by Don Ellis offering trumpet and jazz lessons. I remember I was about to turn 16 because I was just learning to drive and it was big deal to drive one hour each way across Los Angeles -- from San Pedro to the San Fernando Valley -- for a trumpet lesson.

ALBURGER: What was it like to study with him?

DRUMMOND: It was great. I give Don credit for introducing me to a lot, from Luciano Berio to Indian music, from Leonard Stein with whom I studied species counterpoint to Harry Partch, who became my main mentor and a great inspiration.

ALBURGER: So it was through Ellis that you met Harry Partch?

DRUMMOND: Yes. I was still 16 (in the fall 1965) when Don loaned me the Gate 5 recording of *Revelation in the Courthouse Park* and gave me a number to call to attend one of Harry Partch's rehearsals. I called and ended up attending a demonstration of the instruments, mostly by Emil Richards, attempting to enlist some young studio percussionists to play Harry's music. I was absolutely blown away by the instruments, by the demonstration and by Harry himself, who wouldn't answer any of my many questions and told me to read his book. It was easy to see that musicians were needed. I, probably naively, expressed interest in playing and left my number. A couple months later, Harry called and asked me to play in what turned out to be the premiere of *And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma*, which happened during May 1966. During the summer after *Petals*, I tried to help Harry organize some rehearsals of *Delusion of the Fury* but it proved to be a premature attempt. I also helped Harry a little, driving him on errands. By this time, I had read his book -- some of it twice -- and also we got into huge discussions in which I would basically pick his brain or we would discuss the meaning of corporeality: what was corporeal and what wasn't. In the fall of 1966, I began studies at University of Southern California and didn't see much of Harry until he called me and invited me to serve as his assistant the following year at University of California at San Diego. The next year was one of the most amazing of my life. Along with Jonathan Glasier, I assisted Harry throughout the year with tuning, minor instrument repairs, rehearsal organization, and played in the performances that were done that year, including the first performance of *Daphne of the Dunes*. I had a pretty light schedule of classes at UCSD which made me willing and even eager to hang out with Harry as much as possible, which sometimes meant driving all over for a particular hardware supply and sometimes to check out reed organs. The following year Harry's position at UCSD evaporated and there was no reason for me to be there. I moved back to L.A. and resumed studies at USC. For continued participation with Harry, it ended up being the right move though. Harry also moved to L.A. to organize an ensemble to perform at the Whitney Museum in New York during the fall (1968) and then to perform the first performances of *Delusion of the Fury* (possibly his greatest work) at UCLA the following Spring. What can I say? It doesn't get much better than getting to go to New York with Harry Partch when you're 19 years old and then play in *Delusion of the Fury* and make two records for Columbia Masterworks to boot!

ALBURGER: Sounds about right. So what did your music sound like during these years?

DRUMMOND: My music sounded like what you might expect: eclectic and immature, not very original. The reasons were pretty simple: I was young and I had spent a year devoted to Harry while still practicing trumpet for hours per day, and wasn't doing much with composing or my other studies at USC.

ALBURGER: But after that, your lives went different directions?

DRUMMOND: Yes. I stayed in Los Angeles and at USC, never worked with Harry again, but drove down to visit him periodically, probably five or six times per year until around 1973. I didn't see him much during the last year of his life because I was having my own difficulties: a too early marriage breaking up, first year out of college and facing the facts of life about how much time it takes to earn money, etc. I was just getting settled in a cottage in Hollywood after moving out of the apartment I had shared with my ex-wife when my father called to tell me that he read about Harry's death in the paper. But that's getting a little ahead; back in 1969 I decided that with no performances on the horizon, I was better off in LA. Also I really wanted to compose again and was beginning to increasingly feel that Harry was too big an influence in my life, that I had to learn about a lot of music and come to more of my own ideas of what was important to me. As I started to do this, I also came to a major realization, which was I couldn't devote myself to composition and trumpet and do either as well as wanted. This was a very sudden decision, but one that I have never regretted. I still remember clearly. For the first time in my life, I considered quitting trumpet on January 2, 1970, thought about it for about 48 hours and then did it. When I was sure, Harry was the first person I called to discuss my decision. He thought it was great. Sure enough, it paid off for me. With more focus, determination and time, I began to write pieces almost immediately that still sound acceptable. Still eclectic, still not really original, but at least growing in a direction. I still like some of the pieces I composed between 1970 and 1973, but I think my first original sounding piece was in 1974: *Cloud Garden I*, which I completed just after graduating from Cal Arts. Any time I got a tape, I would play it for Harry on my next visit. He was always encouraging, but always frank. There was one piece he really liked a lot (*Dedication*) and one he openly criticized or at least said it made no sense to him (*Ghost Tangents*). It's always amazed me on a personal level that not only did I compose the first music I thought was original in 1974, but that Harry knew my first wife pretty well, but didn't know we had separated, and certainly didn't know that I would meet Stefani Starin, my second and current wife a month after he died... and I also didn't get to play him *Cloud Garden I*. To the best of my knowledge, my relationship with Harry was pretty unique through all of these years, 1966 to about 1972. I'm pretty sure I was the only member of his ensembles that had read *Genesis of a Music* cover to cover several times, frequently discussed and even argued (friendly) over some of the concepts -- also I'm pretty sure I was the only young composer who was showing Harry his/her work during those years. One more thing comes up because I recently reread Bob Gilmore's account of the one class that Harry taught at UCSD. Of course everyone will have their own perception of what went on, but my memory differs a little bit with Harry's and some of the students. Harry blamed the students a bit for disinterest, etc., but I believe that Harry, despite having the ability to explain himself brilliantly in *Genesis of a Music*, just didn't have the experience to teach effectively in the classroom. While it's true that the music faculty and some students didn't give Harry the respect that I believe he deserved, creating some bitterness along the way, I think the students who signed up for his class did so out of interest mixed with an understandable level of misunderstanding and innocence.

They were all graduate students and good musicians, but there was a definite communication gap mostly caused, I believe, by the fact that Harry didn't really get into the role of educator, understanding what his students knew and didn't know, and then building cohesively from there. This actually worked out very much to my advantage since I was asked to set up a series of sessions in which I tried to explain to these students what Harry was trying to explain, a task that very much challenged me to clarify my own understanding at the time. What else can I say about Harry that hasn't been said? He was a great friend despite the age difference. He could be difficult, cantankerous, sometimes impossible, but he was almost always brilliant, interesting, inspiring, even incredible. I loved him dearly.

ALBURGER: He is dearly missed. After his death, you eventually wound up staying in New York for much more than a recording session.

DRUMMOND: Ever since I was 12, I dreamt of coming to New York, mostly because it was the center for jazz. The trip with Harry in 1969 whet my appetite further. I had very little professional reason to be in L.A. I was earning my living as a bookkeeper, which I could do anywhere. Teachers at Cal Arts, like John Bergamo, had come from New York and had made it sound great. Finally, I had a girlfriend, Stefani, who had grown up outside of New York, hated L.A., and wanted to leave as soon as she completed her degree at Cal Arts. The clincher was that I got a Fellowship in Composition to Tanglewood. They were going to send me a round-trip plane ticket, but I asked for the cash equivalent and paid for Stefani and myself to ship half of our belongings by Greyhound and then we drove across the country with the other half on top of our little Datsun. After Tanglewood, Stefani and I were allowed to stay on briefly in the composer's cottage. After a brief period in which we considered moving to Boston, we started looking for jobs and an apartment in New York and moved to the city in December, 1976.

ALBURGER: And eventually in New York, you founded Newband.

DRUMMOND: Yes. It didn't take long to understand that New York didn't have a support system for immigrant artists. If Stefani wanted to perform and I wanted to have my pieces played, we needed to hustle our own gigs instead of hoping the phone would ring. During the spring of 1976, I sent out a bunch of letters proposing a concert of music composed by myself and a few friends. It was quite a surprise when someone from the programming office at New York University called up to hire the band, assuming we were cheap, which we were. She asked me what the band would be called for publicity purposes and I thought for a second and said "Newband." We were very fortunate to have encountered some great young percussionists, James Pugliese, Rick Sacks, and Steve Paysen -- all students of Ray des Roches at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Louis Goldstein, a great pianist from Cal Arts, was at Eastman, and came down to rehearse. We were joined by Allen Blustine, a.k.a. Devendra, then and still one of the best clarinetists in New York, and that was the beginning of Newband. Even though I was still heavily into Harry's music, I was just beginning to construct the first prototype for the zoomoozophone. Newband's first concerts weren't microtonal at all. By 1978, I had completed the first zoomoozophone and that changed everything. With a new instrument we had to create a new repertoire which took several years. By 1982, Newband mostly presented a microtonal repertoire.

ALBURGER: And eventually you and Newband became the caretaker to the Partch instruments.

DRUMMOND: Becoming caretaker of the instruments was a matter of great coincidence. By around 1988 or 1989, Newband was beginning to come into its own. We had performed in some pretty prestigious venues, been to Europe and had released our first CD. In 1989, we were contacted by the Andrew Mellon Foundation and invited to apply for a large grant that would allow the ensemble to grow. We were encouraged to think of a large project that would help develop those aspects of our ensemble that made us unique. One night I had the wild idea that we should apply for a grant to build the seven Harry Partch instruments necessary for a performance of *U.S. Highball*. With Danlee Mitchell's approval, I applied, and much to our amazement, we got the grant. Less than a year later, we were well on our way towards the completion of two instruments when Danlee arranged to come to New York with the instruments for a performance at Juilliard. I wasn't connected to this performance at all, and first heard about it when David Lang of the *Bang on a Can Festival* called me to say that he had asked Danlee if the instruments could stay in New York for a performance at *Bang on a Can*. Danlee was unavailable and made such a performance contingent on my participation; David was calling to see if I wanted to. That led to three performances at *Bang on a Can* followed by a period in which I kept checking with Danlee to see if the instruments could stay for one more performance. All this time the instruments occupied a loft on West 31st Street, right underneath a gigantic laundry that was cleaning all of the linens for several hotels. The spin cycles were amazing; the whole building shook. The following year (1991), Newband staged *The Wayward* for eight nights at Circle in the Square, once again sponsored by *Bang on a Can*. It was a shoestring production, but very exciting nonetheless, directed by Tom O'Horgan. Danlee came out from San Diego and asked me if I would want to take the instruments on "permanent loan." He was getting ready to retire and didn't want the pressure of caring for the instruments. I was happy to. As a lot of the instruments needed renovation, I requested that the Mellon Foundation allow Newband to spend much of the funds doing that.

ALBURGER: In your own works, you now utilize Partch's instruments, plus a few of your own.

DRUMMOND: I have invented two instruments, the zoomoozophone and the juststrokerods. Both were built purposefully to be in tune with Harry's instruments. I have always liked metallic ringing percussion sounds. For me the zoomoozophone especially is a great complement to Harry's percussion instruments and goes especially well with diamond marimba, boo, and also harmonic canons.

ALBURGER: It's so true. Your workshop the other day very well demonstrated that. So what are the pieces that you have written that are most important to you?

DRUMMOND: Well, that's a difficult question and the answer might have been different several years ago as it will probably be different sometime in the future. Right now I would say that *The Day the Sun Stood Still* is my favorite instrumental piece; *The Last Laugh* (a live film score for the silent film of the same name by F.W. Murnau) is my biggest piece definitely; and *Congressional Record* is probably the most fun. Other favorites are a couple small recent pieces, especially *Mars Face*. My favorite "older" pieces are *Then or Never*, *Ruby Half Moon* and, really old, *Zurrjir* (1976).

ALBURGER: Speaking of *Congressional Record*, your style seems denser and more contrapuntal than Partch's. Do you share this perception?

DRUMMOND: Sure. It seems obvious. Harry was more interested in line and less interested in vertical constructions.

ALBURGER: I understand there was a bit of a scare that the Partch instruments would not have a proper home?

DRUMMOND: Fortunately that's over. Housing the instruments has always been a problem. It's a bigger problem now, because we care around my instruments, several replications, plus all of the instruments Harry built at the end of his life which weren't part of most of the moves he had to make. Basically, there are only two ways that one can provide for the instruments: pay commercial rent or find a supportive institution. The second way is in most circumstances much preferred. During Harry's lifetime, institutional support (i.e. at universities), went hot and cold. After he died, Danlee kept the instruments at California State University (San Diego), where Danlee was already a Professor of Music. When I first took charge, I wasn't connected with any institution, and Newband struggled to raise the money for the loft rent every month. After 15 years in Manhattan, Stefani and I and our two children needed much more space than our apartment, and larger apartments were very expensive. We moved to Nyack, a great little village about 30 miles north of Manhattan, and I looked for commercial space there. Amazingly, the local high school band director, Bert Hughes, knew all about Harry and I was quickly offered temporary space in an unused room in the high school. That lasted two years and then we were invited to be Artist Ensemble in Residence at Purchase College, State University of New York, by Donald Steven, Dean of Music. Five years later, Donald left and was replaced by a new dean who immediately asked us to move out. It wasn't much notice, certainly not enough to line up another institution, although we tried. We spent a year rehearsing in a factory warehouse pretty far out of the way in Sloatsburg, New York. That takes us up to a little more than a month ago when we were invited by Ruth Rendleman, Chair of the Music Department at Montclair State University in New Jersey, to move the instruments there. Things seem much better at Montclair than at Purchase. The faculty and administration, including Susan Cole, President, has been most supportive. The bitterness about Purchase seems part of a distant past now, fortunately. Montclair is simply a better place to be, a better university in general, and much more convenient to Manhattan for musicians and composers traveling to practice and rehearse.

[Dean Drummond has been hired as Assistant Professor of Music at Montclair State University and authorized to build a Harry Partch Institute at Montclair -- a place, finally, where the Partch instruments will live, and where interested students can receive a degree studying the late composer's music]

# Concert Reviews

## Simply Gifted

LAURIE HUDICEK

*Simple Gifts.* John Adams's *Shaker Loops*, Paul Schoenfield's *Four Souvenirs*, Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* performed by the 20th Century Consort, conducted by Christopher Kendall. April 15, Ring Auditorium, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.

One may find it odd for a concert to be focused on lives of the Shakers, members of a millenarian sect that practiced celibacy and communal life, since these ideas are far from being 20th century in the minds of modern audiences and musicians, but this is exactly what the 20th Century Consort did.

*Shaker Loops* (1978) is a challenge for the audience as well as for the performers. John Adams's spiritual piece for seven solo strings or seven-part orchestra is a concentration exercise in four continuous movements: "Shaking and Trembling," "Hymning Slews," "Loops and Versus," and "A Final Shaking." Although one does not hear obvious Shaker melodies, the idea of "shakes" is portrayed through endless tremoli, seamlessly entering and exiting without notice. The 20th Century Consort is truly a well-oiled machine when it comes to performing this music. Among the mumbblings of the strings and the Shakers are bits of light, hinting at the birth of Spring, for this piece seems to represent the harmony of nature, the tremolos mimicking insects, rather than the historic dances and songs of the Shakers. Perhaps the most extraordinary sounds emerge in the second part, "Hymning Slews," with a slew of faint non-vibrato glissandi bringing to mind George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*.

Paul Schoenfield's *Four Souvenirs* for violin and piano, with reminiscences of Barber, are "Samba," "Tango," "Tin Pan Alley," and "Square Dance." One hears ragtime in the samba, spirituals in the tango, and is reminded of a lounge act on Tin Pan Alley. These light-hearted displays are charming and enjoyable. It was obvious that the violinist, Elisabeth Adkins, and her orchestra, Lisa Emenheiser Logan, had fun sharing these pieces.

## Proms of Promise

JOHN RODNEY LISTER

*BBC Proms.* August 8, London, England. Through September 1.

The BBC Proms concerts is a festival lasting the entire summer, which offers a wealth of different kinds of music performed by most of the major performers of Britain with distinguished guests from other countries. A number of the most interesting new works offered during the season, including the U.K. premiere of Judith Weir's setting of texts by women writers and the first London performance of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's *Seventh Symphony* had already occurred.

A number of performances in connection with Aaron Copland's centennial afforded a glimpse at some sort of official British view of American music. From the other side of the Atlantic, American music consists primarily of Copland, Gershwin, Carter, and Bernstein along with a little Ives and Cage, and just about nothing else. At least the Copland that was presented was not only the narrow selection which nowadays is complacently considered his "true" and best work, the populist works of the late 30's and 40's. A concert by Oliver Knussen and the London Sinfonietta offered *Short Symphony*, *Clarinet Concerto*, and *Music for the Theatre*. The performance of *Music for the Theatre*, one of Copland's jazz works, was splendid, demonstrating complete understanding of the idiom of the piece along with total technical mastery. Although the mastery remained in evidence in the performance of the *Short Symphony* (hardly an insubstantial matter), its language and logic were less convincingly realized. The piece itself is somewhat problematic. It's chamber music incarnation, the *Sextet*, is arguably Copland's finest work. In the orchestral version, I've never heard a performance which is as spare, bracing, or exhilarating--or convincing. It always seems too plush, too over-stuffed, too thick. This performance was no exception. To that failing was added a tendency, especially in the slow movement, to make the phrasing too continuously unarticulated, and the dotted rhythms too straightforwardly exact. The performance of the *Clarinet Concerto*, which is a less compelling piece by comparison to the other Copland works on the concert, received a polished, sympathetic, and user-friendly performance.

Lucas Foss's *Time Cycle*, which completed the concert, is a product of this composer's early fascination with 60's musical radicalism. It remains a genuine, brilliantly exciting piece, full of the thrill generated for its composer by his new discoveries concerning "atonal and 12-tone devises." The performance was dashing and lovely. The considerable pleasure to be had from Rosemary Hardy's otherwise wonderful singing was somewhat alloyed by a too plummy, overly British accent.

Copland's less often heard and very beautiful choral work, *In the Beginning* was one of the major works on a late night concert by the BBC Singers, conducted by Stephen Cleobury. Although the singing of the chorus and of soloist Sarah Connolly was exemplary, the grasp of the trajectory of the piece, its rhythmic character, and its connection with the words (and their pronunciation) was less satisfying. Mr. Cleobury seemed intent on trying to make *In the Beginning*, as well as the Ives *Psalms* and Schuman *Carols of Death*, sound as much like C.V. Stanford as possible. Although expectations were high for the performance of Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, it also lacked the kind of sharp and lithe rhythmic quality necessary. Perhaps this was the result of the Albert Hall Organ (the accompaniment was Bernstein's reduced orchestration for organ, harp, and percussion). The singing of counter-tenor Robin Tyson in the second *Psalms* was nonetheless highly satisfying.

Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Orchestra did their part in the Copland birthday party by playing the *Symphonic Ode*. A product of Copland's abstract modernist style of the 20's, this work has many of the same daunting rhythmic difficulties of the *Short Symphony*, which followed it three years later. These offered no problems to the performers, who delivered them with panache and realized the imposing span of the work's structure with eloquence and passion.

Joining the Copland on this concert was the Shostakovich *Symphony No. 11* ("*The Year 1905*"). Although the program notes made an interesting case for Shostakovich's intentions and possible political commentary in his writing a work about the brutal suppression of a popular demonstration by Czarist forces in the wake of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the music seemed to me to be in line with the good old-fashioned view of Shostakovich as a yes man. Even though full of skillful and persuasive ideas, it seemed a long, torpid dose of propaganda, despite the very fine performance.

By contrast, Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8*, which was brilliantly performed by David Atherton and The BBC National Orchestra of Wales on a concert commemorating the 25th anniversary of the composer's death, is an astounding work, bountifully inventive and clearly, carefully, and fully argued over an enormous span of time and emotions. There was a time when, at least in academic circles, Shostakovich could simply not be taken seriously, yet there is undeniable evidence that the composer was an amazingly masterly artist and a truly brilliant orchestrator. The other work on the concert was the *Suite of Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti* from 1974. Unfortunately, much of the subtlety and expressive power of the vocal works of Shostakovich are lost to people who don't understand Russian. This seemed to be the case here, anyway, except for the brilliant beginning of the last song, despite what seemed to be a very good performance by the aforementioned performers and baritone Sifar Leiferkus.

More recent European music was represented in several concerts. These included Boulez's *Rituel* and Berio's *SOLO*, the former performed by The London Philharmonic and Mark Wigglesworth. The Boulez, a piece dedicated to the memory of the Italian composer Bruno Maderna, is solemn and calculatedly repetitive, building its ritualistic character deliberately and with orchestral sureness. The Berio, a work for solo trombone and orchestra, is orchestrally inventive, somewhat madcap, and very enjoyable, as was the bravura performance, by Christian Lindberg and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jukka-Pekka Saraste.

On September 1, The BBC Symphony, joined by The Berlin Radio Choir, and conducted by Ingo Matzmacher, presented the UK premiere of Hans Werner Henze's *Symphony No. 9*. Henze's relationship with his native Germany has not been simple or straightforward, and has been mingled with a changing political consciousness over most of his lifetime. The work is a product of that relationship and is dominated by Henze's experience with the German Fatherland during and before the Second World War and with his meditation concerning the Holocaust. It is an enormous span of seven movements, lasting around an hour. Its text -- by Hans-Ulrich Treichel, based on Anna Segher's novel *Das siebte Kreuz* -- is set entirely for a large double chorus, much divided. The lack of soloists is supposed to give the work a universality, although it is debatable whether it is that or a certain non-specific lack of dramatic power that is the result of this decision, since the text is often in first person and refers to highly personal interaction with the events of a highly dramatic and personal story. For this listener, despite the fact that Henze is a composer of great power and accomplishment, his ninth symphony is something of a soft egg, although it is certainly possible that, much as with the Shostakovich songs mentioned above, a native speaker might have found this particular combination of words and music to be more satisfying.

György Kurtag is a composer with a highly powerful voice based on intense compression of material and time scale. His stature as a composer is considerable and seems to become more evident with increasing acquaintance with his music. A concert by the Keller Quartet, on August 14, presented six works of Kurtag's -- all of them very short, very intimate, and very concentrated, interspersed through a performance of Bach's *The Art of Fugue*. One of these works, the *Twelve Microludes*, is a sort of homage to J.S. Bach, as was another, entitled, in fact, *Homage to J. S. Bach*. Another, *Officium breve*, op. 28, is a tribute to Webern, the last movement of whose *Second Cantata* provides the basic material for the work. Although one might question the implied placement of Kurtag into certain company and also derive some irritation from the extreme and aggressive solemnity of the event, there was no questioning the serious musical intent and content of his music, and no avoiding the great satisfaction of the encounter with the music or the performances, which were splendid.

Like Kurtag, Percy Grainger is a composer of great individuality whose music sounds like no one else's. Also like Kurtag, Grainger works on a very small scale. Grainger has had a major influence on a number of British composers, ranging from the more conservative Benjamin Britten to the very unconservative Michael Finnissy and the British avant garde represented by such composers as Dave Smith and Gavin Bryars, so he is not merely a composer of novelty numbers. Another late-night concert by The Joyful Company of Singers and The City of London Sinfonia, conducted by Richard Hickox, presented fifteen of Grainger's works. These represented several of the musical preoccupations which lasted throughout Grainger's career: British folk music, Scandinavian folk music, the works of Kipling, and "free music." Perhaps the most striking performances were those of *Danny Deaver*, *A Dollar and Half a Day*, and *The Widow's Party* by the men of Joyful Company of Singers, but all of them had verve, sweetness, freshness, and great beauty.

## Classy Glass

### MICHAEL MCDONAGH

World premiere of Philip Glass's *In the Penal Colony* (2000). September 17, A Contemporary Theatre, Falls Theatre, Seattle, WA.

Director JoAnne Akalaitis and composer Philip Glass have worked together frequently, some of their most famous efforts being stagings of theatre pieces by modernist masters like Genet and Beckett, and Glass has written that "what has always stirred me is theater which challenges one's ideas of society, one's notions of order." Genet and Beckett certainly did that and so did Brecht, and Franz Kafka. Glass's new "opera theatre work" *In the Penal Colony* is a pretty faithful adaptation of Kafka's long short story of the same name which was written in 1914 and published five years later. And Kafka's thoroughgoing use of allegory makes it susceptible to a variety of interpretations. It happens on an island but we're never told where or when, and though both dialog and action are minutely described it's also mysterious and intangible as a dream, which suits Glass to a tee, because his work occurs in an expanded sort of dream time. We're not always sure where we are, and yet the sensations the music evokes are palpable, and definitely real.

*In the Penal Colony* is a true chamber opera for 2 singers -- tenor and baritone, 1 speaking actor and 2 non-speaking ones, and an unamplified string quintet, which lasts 80 minutes, and adding anything else would have lessened its impact. Though the subject matter is severe -- a condemned man will be executed in a 12 hour span by the Harrow which inscribes his offense on his body with tiny needles -- Glass's musical setting never falls prey to overheated expressionist cliché, no sudden sforzandos or outsize climaxes get in the way. And the singers never shout or bark their lines. This is a play, yes, but one with the added dimension of music, and writing a series of arias for tenor John Duykers, who plays the visitor, and baritone Herbert Parry, who plays the officer (his brother Eugene is doubling the part), would impede its progress.

Glass's score also combines drama and meditation in equal measure. The piece begins innocently enough with double bass, cello and viola playing a simple, mournful phrase, after which the first and second violins join in. And as in any opera since Wagner the orchestra has the heft of the drama, and the quintet's starkly beautiful music participates, comes forward, recedes, comments and remembers (the opening gets a partial --and transfigured -- recap at the end). *Colony* is all of a piece with Glass's string quartet writing, especially that of *No. 3 ("Buczak")* and *No. 6 ("Dracula")*, with sometimes startling but entirely apposite harmonies, and moments where harmonics, unison scales and contrary motion effectively convey tenderness, terror, fear and ambivalence. The quintet accompanies and/or contrasts with the vocal writing which has the character of a heightened though still conversational recitative, the only part approaching a flat-out aria being the visitor's final speech where he reports the officer's death by the machine.

Akalaitis adds to the surreal tone of the story by including actor Jose Gonzalez as Kafka, who's dressed like a young version of the author in a severe suit, white round-collared shirt and tie, and who speaks lines from his diaries in a cultured Mittel Europa accent. Far from being a mere literary conceit, he also sometimes takes part in the action, especially in one particularly stunning moment where he assists the officer as he undresses himself for his death, long sash unfurling. Akalaitis has also devised odd but effective movements for the cast, and her blocking creates vivid stage pictures. She's immensely aided by Rudy Wurlitzer's expert script which has the fluidity of one for a film, and cannily compresses and dramatizes Kafka's original text, strengthening the visitor's role so that he doesn't seem so weak. Set designer John Conklin's torture machine is forebodingly veiled and luridly revealed by Jennifer Tipton's lighting, and Susan Hilferty's period costumes are handsome and evocative -- even the Metropolitan String Ensemble of Seattle -- Tom Dziekonski (violin 1), Carlos Flores (violin 2), Michael Lieberman (viola), Virginia Dziekonski (cello) and Todd Gowers (bass) are elegantly dressed, which may be a reference to the musicians who played for officers in the death camps. Steven M. Levine and Matt Seidman make strong impressions as the soldier and the condemned man. *In the Penal Colony* has been variously interpreted as an indictment of capital punishment, a parable of social responsibility and a study in obsession. Glass and his collaborators wisely leave these questions open. Theater, after all, should challenge one's ideas of society and order. This production moves on to Chicago's Court Theatre where it will play from November 11 to December 10. But I doubt that seeing it there will be half so involving as seeing it at ACT's non-proscenium Falls Theatre where everything can be seen at once from all angles.

## Tricky Thomas at SF Symphony Opener

### MARK ALBURGER

*San Francisco Symphony Gala.* September 20, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

"Tricky devil!" she shouted gleefully between war whoops. My companion was applauding Michael Tilson Thomas's group sing-along of "The Star-Spangled Banner" that opened the San Francisco Symphony's 2000-2001 season at Davies Symphony Hall on September 20. And tricky he was -- asking for a pianissimo in the high mid-section that many singers like to belt, and holding the last note for an inordinate and triumphant length of time.

Typical tricky Thomas: always surprising, always entertaining. Starting the program with Aaron Copland's *Danzón Cubano* was a bit on the adventurous side, too, as it is not exactly a barnburner. But the work certainly is colorful and appealing enough, and was very well received (although I still miss the premiere of a newly-commissioned work for the curtain-raiser -- a tradition Thomas established during his first three years of tenure here, which has been left to lapse in the past two).

Also on the mildly adventurous side was Mozart's *Notturmo in D Major for Four Orchestras* where Thomas sent groups of strings and horns to the four corners of the concert hall (well, not really -- one group was on stage and the rest were apparently hidden in lobbies). To paraphrase Harry Partch, this music did one thing, but it did that one thing very well -- which was to provide various spatial echoic effects of similar music phalanging about the room. There was little (in this performance, at least) interest in counterpoint among the small orchestras, and, after three fairly standard-issue Mozart movements, the point was made in spades. Thank goodness Charles Ives, John Cage, Henry Brant, Edgar Varèse, and even Pink Floyd have made better cases for spatial music.

The program concluded with a thoroughly engaging, visceral, even blistering reading of Ravel's famous *Bóléro*. Never have I heard the melodic outlines and the orchestrational brilliance with such clarity. Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony made this music sound as fresh and festive as the evening deserved.

Tricky devils.

## No Saint to Remember

### MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* performed by the Mark Morris Dance Group. September 24, Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Any well-composed piece -- even an operatic one -- should be complete in and of itself. And since all forms, including chamber music, are in some sense theatrical, you shouldn't have to do much to make a piece come alive on the stage. Though initially conceived as a two-way collaboration between poet Gertrude Stein (1874-1947) and composer Virgil Thomson (1896-1989), *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1927-28) works fine when heard as music and text. Costumes, decor and movement can of course make it seem an entirely different piece. Thomson's opera, which is one of the most original ever written, has always had to live down its sensational 1934 premiere which had an all-black cast and fanciful sets and costumes by the reclusive New York painter Florine Stettheimer. Other productions have been staged, including one by the Opera Ensemble of New York, and Robert Wilson's which was seen at Houston Grand Opera and at Lincoln Center. Now we have Mark Morris's take on this elusive masterpiece -- in the composer's cut version -- 50 minutes out of 90 minutes -- and I'm afraid take is the right word because he's re-cast the opera in his own not very interesting image. Like a bad movie composer, Morris simply reproduces what's happening on the screen, or in this case, the score. This approach worked in his *The Hard Nut*, with its quick cuts and dissolves, but it doesn't work here.

Sure, the piece's continuity sounds fractured and abrupt, but Morris hasn't the faintest idea of how to glue it together so that it projects as a series of related events. Jumps, nervous wiggings, endless twirling patterns (which look like John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* left-over stagings) and perfunctory pas de deux by Michelle Yard (St Teresa) and John Heginbotham (St. Ignatius) failed to fit or add to the musico-theatrical experience, and they certainly didn't reveal the work at hand. Relentlessly busy, campy, and non-ritualistic -- Morris' staging had no characters, no scenes, and no sense of inevitable forward motion. Though *Four Saints* is both non-linear and non-narrative, it does hang together on its own unique terms. Stein and Thomson were neither jokes nor frauds but Morris seems to think they're "just fun" and his burlesque of their intentions is a grave disservice to both.

His production team didn't help either. Maira Kalman's primary color drops were faux Matisse, and it didn't make much sense to only use a few -- those sitting front center couldn't have seen them, as they were ranked behind the proscenium. Elizabeth Kurtzman's Spanish peasant costume designs looked like the badly dated ones you see in productions of a war-horse. Still all the singers projected joy and expressivity, especially soprano Jayne West as St Teresa I, alto Jennifer Lane as St Teresa II, baritone William Sharp as St Ignatius, and mezzo Elspeth Franks and baritone David Newman as Commere and Compere. Morris, however, had the unfortunate idea of placing them above the pit stage right, and in the pit. It was after all *his*, and despite all his acclaimed "musicality" he was obviously unwilling to let his dancers and singers share the same stage. Glass and Susan Marshall solved this challenge in their Cocteau opera *Les Enfants Terribles* by letting their singers and dancers interact which added meaning as well as visual beauty to the mix.

In an age where people crave distraction as a matter of course, Morris's *Four Saints* might just be what the doctor ordered. "Modern dance" is still pretty much an ailing patient and this production won't resuscitate it. *Four Saints* looked like *Oklahoma!* but without Agnes De Mille's balls. The Berkeley Symphony and the American Bach Soloists under conductor Craig Smith, however, played and sang superbly.

## Same Old Same New

### MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 4* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, Maurice Ravel's *Tzigane*, and Aaron Copland's *Third Symphony*. September 27, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

It was like the Symphony opener, only the audience was worse dressed and better behaved. Here again was music by Aaron Copland and a composer working in France evoking Hispanic traditions.

Once again Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony began with the unexpected in *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 4*, by Heitor Villa-Lobos. But this Brazilian expatriate has not only a French but a German accent here in one of his wonderful series of works which combine the spark and energy of his native land with the refinement and craft of Igor Stravinsky and Johan Sebastian Bach. After a "Preludio" of glowing strings, Villa-Lobos ratchets up the color in a "Coral" of sparkling wind and percussion instruments. The beauty and vibrancy of the "Aria" and "Danza" left listeners breathless and appreciative of this first San Francisco Symphony performance, long overdue.

19-year-old Sarah Chang was the featured violinist Maurice Ravel's sensuous and fiery *Tzigane*. This was an impressive realization, where Chang made up in rhythmic drive and committed interpretation for any initial intonational questions. She stomped her foot and carried on like the wild gypsy virtuoso Jelly d'Arány, for whom this music was originally written in 1922.

Aaron Copland's massive, almost bloated *Third Symphony* filled the second half of the program. The dream of the Great American Symphony is very present in this powerful work, from the expansive "Molto moderato" into the gigantic "Allegro molto" scherzo second movement. But sometimes, as another great American would have said (in the persona of his picaresque hero Huck Finn), "Over-reaching don't pay." We hear the great prairie/cowboy composer from Brooklyn set up sweeping, noble melodies; we are bowled over by amber waves of brass. Is this sometimes almost too much of a good thing? Do not a few of the composer's more succinct ballet scores call up such pictures in a more perfect manner?

Copland's *Third* is a worthy symphony, with an intricate slow third movement and a stirring finale. But sometimes less is more. The conclusion incorporates one of Copland's most stirring and simple scores, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, as a point of departure. While the result is exciting, exacting, and full of craft (both in the sense of brimming with technical skill and occasionally slightly menacing), one has the sense of a TV show being blown up to movie-size proportions. For everything that is gained something is lost.

But there was nothing lost in this commanding performance, which rounded out another very satisfying evening at the symphony.

# Record Reviews

## Diaz-Infante Double

### DAVID CLEARY

Ernesto Diaz-Infante. *Solus*. Pax.

Jeff Kaiser and Ernesto Diaz-Infante. *Pith Balls and Inclined Planes*. Pfmentum.

Cursory listening to *Solus*, a 45-minute solo piano piece by Ernesto Diaz-Infante, could theoretically prove maddening. The work's 13 movements all concern themselves with similarly textured material: pointillistic, frantic, atonal, nervous, improvised-sounding filigree out of which much lengthier pitches precipitate like salt crystals from a settling solution. In some ways, the piece suggests the notion of Milton Babbitt reincarnated as a jazz pianist. An unsympathetic hearer might say, "It all sounds the same." But like Babbitt, there's a larger picture lurking behind the thicket of busy passage-work—or, to put it another way, one needs to listen here with long-range ears just as one needs to step back when viewing a Seurat painting. When one does, interesting pitch underpinnings can be heard steering each short movement from start to finish. And the few movements that more significantly vary the approach (number VIII, for example, interpolates lots of silences, while the eleventh piece in the set weaves slower, more regular rhythmic figures into its musical fabric) really stand out in the collection. Surprisingly, it all works rather well, better than one might anticipate.

Jeff Kaiser joins Diaz-Infante for the CD *Pith Balls and Inclined Planes*, a release amply demonstrating that these two musicians share a mutual fascination with jittery, jazz-derived improvisational figures. The more varied scoring used (trumpet, flugelhorn, acoustic guitar, voices, and electronics) makes this a preferable introduction for the casual listener. And here, one encounters very colorful, inventive writing for the instruments; Diaz-Infante in fact rarely plays the guitar in traditional fashion, relying almost exclusively on scraping and scrubbing the strings (obtaining few recognizable pitches in the process) as well as wiping and striking the body of the instrument. Kaiser's trumpet playing is equally extended-techniques friendly, as his solo selection *Fearful of Contagion* clearly confirms via varied mute usage and simultaneous sing-and-play effects. Diaz-Infante's *She Surreptitiously Introduced Colored Shirts* is especially evocative. Here, the scrambling, non-pitched guitar material, scuttling in front of a portentously droning electronic backdrop, suggests field mice agitatedly trying to take cover to avoid being swallowed up by a tornado looming in the distance.

Sound quality and production values on these two platters are generally good. Program notes on the pieces and composer bios would have been nice to see, however; unfortunately neither CD contains them. These are unusual, often intriguing listens -- received with thanks.

## One from Opus One

### DAVID CLEARY

*Opus One*. Opus One.

The term "split decision" best characterizes this CD. Of the four composers contained herein, two produce works memorable enough to merit a revisit while the remaining pair regrettably do not.

The best selection on this release is Mary Jean Van Appledorn's *Rhapsody for Solo Violin and Orchestra*. Good features such as a strong sense of drama, clear articulation of form, and effective fiddle writing are exhibited here. This is also the most dissonant selection of the bunch, containing tonal underpinnings but largely concerned with octatonic pitch collections and polytonal constructs. It's a worthwhile listen. *Scorpius Rising* by Hayg Boyadjian contains various attributes as well. While more triadic, demonstrating hints of Sibelius, Shostakovich, Holst, and Mussorgsky, the verticals and progressions employed are not the usual functional harmony fare. Like Sibelius, this is craggy, gritty stuff, full of shard-like melodic figures and raw scoring effects. This listener found the work hard to sort out in terms of long-range form, but appreciated its unpredictable manner of speech—this orchestral composition never settles for the easy way out.

Other selections pleased less. Michael Mauldin's *Desert Light* for chamber orchestra shows an obvious fascination with Stravinsky's oeuvre; ostinati, bitonal idioms, and block-like, jogging figures are found in abundance, but unfortunately the rhythms in general tend to be square and rather predictable. And the work's smooth sheen, reminiscent at times of soundtrack fare such as *Victory at Sea*, somehow leaves this reviewer cold. John Donald Robb is represented by two items, *Scenes from a New Mexico Mountain Village* (a suite for chamber orchestra) and *Elegy for Our War Dead* (for string orchestra, the second movement of his *Symphony No. 1*). Both were written during the 1940's and are cast in the U.S. neoclassic idiom then very much in vogue. The latter shows clear acquaintance with Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, while the former is a travelogue-type set of character pieces suggestive at times of Grofe, Copland, and film music. Both are heartfelt, sincere, ably written works that somehow lack that special spark found in the finest examples of Americana style.

Performances, featuring the Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra led by David Oberg and Joel Eric Suben, are solidly capable. Violinist Charles Rex does a handsome job with the solo part in the van Appledorn. Sound quality is good here and production values are not bad.

## Many Hued Hyla

### DAVID CLEARY

Lee Hyla. *Riff and Transfiguration*. Tzadik.

Lee Hyla is a composer currently teaching at the New England Conservatory of Music. This release primarily showcases his recent offerings for solo piano.

As in his other works, the compositions on this CD strike a perfect balance between structure and surface, intellect and guts, design and drive. Mild echoes of music as varied as Eric Dolphy's jazz improvisations, Aaron Copland's *Piano Variations*, and Jerry Lee Lewis's "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" can be heard here, but Hyla's pieces skillfully transcend such influences to forge a forcefully compelling personal style. These compositions are astonishingly primal in feel, sporting some of the fiercest, most commanding music this side of Bartók's middle-period quartets, Varese's mature ensemble pieces, and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. And like those repertoire chestnuts, Hyla's works are gesturally economic and formally inventive. The brief album opener *Third Party*, for example, utilizes two concise ideas: a jagged snippet consisting of two major thirds and a running figure, and an atmospheric, ostinato-laced fragment based on minor thirds and replete with stopped notes. From these, Hyla constructs a tight, terse entity that unfolds in surprising, yet logical ways. The work's sparkingly lucid structure feels organic, appearing to evolve spontaneously through a natural interplay of materials, rather than being imposed from without.

The individual movements of the title work perfectly combine feral energy, tight construction, and an innate sense of line. And the persistent use of "riffs" (defined by the composer as being memorable recurring gestures) in each movement becomes a unifying device, giving the piece a strongly satisfying sense of overall integrity. *Basic Training* and *Amnesia Variance* demonstrate that this composer is equally at home in lengthier formats. Hyla's signature economy of means proves to be no limitation in these larger works, however. Here, he coaxes a dazzling amount of variety from a few pithy basis phases.

Sound quality on this release is excellent and production values are fine. Performances, by the Callithumpian Ensemble and pianists Mia Chung, Stephen Drury, and Judith Gordon, are extraordinary.

When placing this utterly terrific CD next to his stellar earlier releases such as *We Speak Etruscan* (New World 80491-2) and *In Double Light* (Avant 015), can one consider Hyla to be the finest concert-music composer born since 1950? This reviewer emphatically thinks so. If you only buy one new-music CD this year, make it this one.

## Hyperblue

DAVID CLEARY

David Rakowski. *Hyperblue*. CRI.

David Rakowski is one of America's finest, most accomplished young composers. In the booklet notes for this CD, he mentions having "spent and misspent a good portion of his youth playing keyboards in a rock band and trombone in community bands." This listener believes Rakowski's time was excellently employed this way; while his music exhibits some affinity with the Columbia/Princeton ethos, it also possesses a clarity, directness, sparkle, and vigor very much its own. It is tempting to think that years of playing Sousa marches and Rolling Stones tunes helped leaven this composer's rigorous training, ultimately putting Rakowski onto the path that resulted in the uniquely personal style exhibited here.

East Coast influences are most clearly seen in his *Three Songs on Poems of Louise Bogan*. The piano accompaniment here is expressionistically moody (though more textural than linear in approach), supporting an atonal, yet atmospheric vocal line. The effect of the first two songs is mysteriously understated, of the last, plushly warm.

The three large ensemble pieces on this release share certain characteristics. All employ unison openings (either melodic or rhythmic), scherzo-oriented material, and three-movement fast-slow-fast layouts played without intervening pauses. As is true of the best composers, though, Rakowski inventively fleshes out his basic blueprints with widely varied and engaging material of significant originality. The title piece's outer movements are restless, intense, and dramatic, surrounding an elegantly earnest contrapuntal midsection. The whole exhibits an almost Beethovenian sense of demonstrative energy. *Attitude Problem*, while equally substantive, is somewhat lighter in feel. The work's last movement tangibly takes its scherzo label to heart; while still kinetically intense, it utilizes silences and sudden parameter shifts to delightfully droll effect. And the slow movement here is expressive in a still and crystalline, not resolute, way. *Sesso e Violenza* employs its flute, strings, piano, and percussion scoring to stunning effect. This is a colorful feast for the ears, willowy and gorgeous. One can revel in this piece solely on a sensually sonic level--but to stop there would be a mistake, as there is much melodic and structural beauty to enjoy here as well.

Scattered in between these larger pieces, like lustrous wildflowers in a verdant field, are found numerous piano etudes. Most of these, such as *Martler*, *Corrente*, and *BAM!*, are vibrant, good-natured toccatas of different kinds; the major exception is *Les Arbres Embues*, a warmly atmospheric work which suggests an updating of Messiaen's slow piano compositions.

Performances (featuring Ensemble 21, the piano trio Triple Helix, soprano Judith Bettina, and pianists Marilyn Nonken and James Goldsworthy) are uniformly excellent. Sound quality and production values are fine.

Simply put, this is a significant release by a major composer, thoroughly enjoyed and highly recommended. One's money will not be misspent in picking up a copy.

## Newmark of the Green Angel

DAVID CLEARY

Mary Lou Newmark.. *Green Angel*. Green Angel.

In some ways, one can characterize Mary Lou Newmark as a quintessential West-Coast composer. Her music is clearly sound-oriented, demonstrates a liking for pop and non-Western idioms, and exhibits a fascination with philosophical concerns, often religious or otherwise metaphysical. But this is not mindless pabulum for the Windham Hill set -- these works show an awareness of structure and appealing level of energy and drive not often encountered in such styles.

Newmark's instrument is the electric violin, and many of the selections on this release feature the amplified fiddle in a solo capacity. *Prayer and Meditation* is a soulful and highly charged diptych, combining classic folk-inspired playing with internalized reinterpretations of religious music ranging from Hebrew cantillation to Medieval organum in an earthy, unique way. These pieces unfold in a freely rhapsodic, yet appealing manner. *Seven Sacred Stones* shows that Newmark can handle miniatures equally well; these are colorful, nicely wrought gems that are also grouped to delineate a larger sense of overall balance. And able use of form surfaces in *On the Green*, its three main parts respectively showing attractive takes on ternary, variation, and rondo constructs. The last movement features a gutsy, raw sound akin to that of Jimi Hendrix-style electric guitar, only one of the many striking timbres encountered here. Utilization of such effects as tape delay, ring-modulated sonorities, and thick reverb provide further variety.

The other pieces on this release combine either electric violin or speaking voice with what the program notes call "electronic soundscapes." The latter combine samples or concrete sounds with occasional synthesizer-oriented sonics. *Voices of Faith* stitches together an enjoyable crazy-quilt of religious song snippets from around the globe, while *Pele* is a joyous, bubbling, South Seas inspired fantasia. And *Comments from the Cosmos* combines pop, jazz, African, and Caribbean influences, using voice interjections to ground the mix in rondo-like fashion.

Newmark performs well here, able to traverse delicate passages, outgoing showy figuration, and everything in between with aplomb. Editing is fine and sound quality is very good. Highly recommended.

## Paulus Fantasy

### DAVID CLEARY

Stephen Paulus. *A Chamber Fantasy*. Innova.

Your intrepid critic always listens to every CD he receives for review from start to finish. And in the case of the present release, he can say he's particularly glad he did so. Sorry to say, the first three of Stephen Paulus' compositions contained herein, *Dramatic Suite* (1997), *Courtship Songs* (1981), and *Air on Seurat* (1992), did not please. All are intelligently put together, articulate formal concerns clearly, have their energetic moments, and show adroit handling of a consonant harmonic language redolent of Debussy, Copland, and Stravinsky. But other traits of this music prove more problematic, including slow unfolding, extremely heavy reliance on ostinato, a strong tendency towards sugary sentimentality, and squareness of phrase, rhythm, and melody.

Fortunately, the final selection, *Partita Appassionata* (1996), is another skillet of steak altogether. Paulus here consistently infuses the music with a level of intensity and drive heretofore only encountered sporadically on this disc. The dissonant harmonies used are suggestive of Bartok and manage to undercut any tendencies toward mawkishness in the slow movements -- in fact, the fourth movement, entitled "Tenderly," effectively conjures up the ecstatic feel of the finale from Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* without sounding like a style clone. And the ostinato passages and melodic figures used exhibit sufficient quirks and wrinkles that the listener is kept enjoyably off balance. It's a piece eminently worthy of this composer's sturdy reputation.

Performances vary a bit on this CD, with the strongest playing coming from pianist Jill Dawe and cellist Mina Fisher. Violinist Troy Gardner regrettably struggles at times in the fast passages of the *Partita*. Production values are fine. Sound quality is okay, if a bit dry in places. Unfortunately, the track labeling is wrong in the latter part of this release, which will likely cause confusion for listeners and classical radio hosts. The track timings are correct and arranged in proper order, but the single-movement *Air on Seurat* is track 11, not 16 -- thus the *Partita* thus begins one track later than indicated.

## Tapestry of the Americas

### DAVID CLEARY

*Tapestry: New Music from the Americas*. Innova.

As one might expect from a disc bearing this title, one finds a broad spectrum of works here, including music by composers located throughout various countries of the Western Hemisphere. Quality-wise, it's a mixed release featuring a few clear standouts.

Two entries, both by Latin American composers and representing the extremes of consonance and dissonance on this CD, impressed most. *Preludio y Danza*, a solo violin work by Mexico's Leonardo Velazquez, is unabashedly triadic and neoclassic (though nary a whiff of Stravinskian influence is heard here). Its manner of speech is forthright and appealing, featuring some splendidly idiomatic violin writing. And the piece is brief yet substantial, not at all afraid to leave the listener hungry for more. *Vida Furtiva*, by Argentinean Pablo Ortiz, also bills itself in the program notes as being "vaguely tonal," though any tonality present is heavily submerged in a dissonant American East Coast ethos. But this is good music to hear: dramatic, vigorous, and written in a showy and stylish manner for its trio of violin, clarinet, and piano. And while its ideas change in quicksilver manner, the moods expressed are nicely paced in general and are cast in a larger overall structure.

Selections by composers based north of the border fare somewhat less well. The best is *Five Pieces for Three Players* by America's Yehuda Yannay. This is an eclectic, energetic entity, often but not always built from ostinato patterns and generally exploring a distinctive middle ground between tonal and non-tonal idioms. Movement four, featuring jagged unison rhythms and an initial reliance on octaves, suggests kinship to Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. The piece is imaginative and often enjoyable, though at times diffuse and resolutely odd in its gestures and unfolding. Yannay's other offering, *Loose Connections* for violin, clarinet, and contrabass, regrettably comes across as being a bit too scattered, lacking the large-scale organization of Ortiz's work—though its bodacious risk-taking merits favorable mention. The other piece scored for this particular trio, *Diasporan Dances* by Matthew Nicholl of the United States, tries to override its commercial music sound world by utilizing unpredictable phrase lengths and jumpy dance rhythms. Sadly, it never escapes a certain feel of commodity. Canadian Patricia Repar's voice/clarinet/piano entry *Color Prayer* regrettably did not please. It contains all the earmarks of pedestrian 1960's experimental special effects works, including a pretentious polyglot text, inconsistent harmonic language, non-directional unfolding, and prescriptive employment of extended techniques. Performances are very good here, with clarinetist Frankie J. Kelly and violinist Adrian Justus deserving special mention from a worthy clutch of players. Production is fine. Sound quality varies noticeably; stuffy, veiled sonics pervade the Ortiz and Repar, often rendering the soft passages in the latter selection wan and indistinct.

# Book Review

## Sound Visions

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Jon Burlingame. *Sound and Vision: 60 Years of Motion Picture Soundtracks*. Billboard Books, NY:2000; 244pgs

One of the biggest problems classical composers face is getting repeat performances. Sure, you can get a commission, but once your piece is premiered it often drops from sight, and even musicians as celebrated as Pierre Boulez have this problem, which is why they conduct their own work.

Film composers don't have to worry about live performances. They do, however, have to deal with phenomenally tight deadlines, unmusical directors and moneymen, and the fact that concert hall composers don't take them seriously. How could anything as functional as sound married to image be good? Well some of the best and certainly most accessible music in the last century has been written specifically for film, and Jon Burlingame's new book is a knowledgeable and affectionate guide to a sizable portion of that repertory, which began almost with the inception of sound when Bell Laboratories produced the 33 1/3 rpm discs for William Axt's music to John Barrymore's *Don Juan* in 1926. Pianists or theatre orchestras had sometimes accompanied silents but a synchronized score to a talkie was a huge technological and potentially lucrative step. And producers and record executives both then and now were never loath to make money on their product.

Burlingame charts the ups and downs of the industry --he focusses almost entirely on the American one -- and how that has affected the art. One of the biggest threats to film composers was the rock and roll invasion, and pop music, which now includes such genres and subgenres as hip hop, industrial, techno, and acid jazz, hasn't diminished that threat. And it's a sad fact that composers today are in a far worse position than ever -- even more impossible deadlines for pictures with astronomical budgets -- so why would anyone want to be original? As the revered film composer Alex North once said -- "If you're not daring in your art, then you're bankrupt." It's tempting to think that musicians of his era -- the Silver Age of film music -- did more innovative work and I think that's generally true. Art today is pretty bland, and lots of it, including a good deal of music, is pretty generic too.

Still there are fine younger composers working now and the author discusses a lot of them, like Christopher Young (b. 1957) whose subtle blues-inflected score to last year's *The Hurricane* is the only reason to see this studio product. Howard Shore (b. 1947) and David Shire (b. 1937) are also doing interesting work -- the former's stark score to *SEVEN* (1995) increased its atmosphere while the latter's concise music to *All the President's Men* (1976) was more like a theatre score -- sparse, subtle, never intrusive. And surely one of the most gifted dramatic voices in the biz today is that of Eliot Goldenthal whose knockout scores to *Interview with the Vampire* (1994) and Michael Mann's masterpiece *Heat* (1995) added even more atmosphere and tension. Burlingame also includes the work of French composer Philippe Sarde (1945-) whose music is always sophisticated and evocative. A serious omission is any mention, let alone discussion, of Richard Robbins, whose usually dreamlike music for director James Ivory makes his often claustrophobic dramas feel less so.

The author gives the lion's share of his space, and rightly so, to the inventors of the Hollywood style, like Alfred Newman (1900-1970) - - who's often underrated; Max Steiner (1888-1971) -- who's often the reverse (Bette Davis said "Max knew more about drama than any of us"); Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) -- a marvelous craftsman; Miklos Rozsa (1907-1995); and the always distinctive Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975). More subtle though equally versatile figures like Hugo Friedhofer (1902-1981) -- his desert battle sequence in *The Young Lions* (1958) is quietly phenomenal, and Franz Waxman (1906-1967), and worlds to themselves like Dimitri Tiomkin (1894-1979) also get their due.

Burlingame also singles out the efforts of film composers like Elmer Bernstein (1922-) and David Raskin (1912-), who've gone out of their way to see that film music is taken seriously, taught and recorded. Also mentioned are the efforts of small labels like Varese Sarabande who have recorded late and recent classics, especially masterpieces like North's 1968 *2001*, and John Williams's complete *Superman* (1978), and Citadel which releases old ones. Burlingame also contributes a quite extensive bibliography of serious books on the subject of film music. With works like this the art, if not the business, can be seen in the full light of day as one worthy of respect, and an honorable way to make a living in a market-driven world.

# Calendar

November 1

*College Music Society Annual Meeting.* Toronto, Canada. Through November 5.

Chen Yi's *Fiddle Suite*. Lucerne, Switzerland. Repeated November 24, Japan.

Les Percussions de Strasbourg in Xenakis's *Persephassa*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

NEC Symphony Orchestra. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 2

The National Symphony Orchestra presents the Washington D.C. premiere performances of Benjamin Lees's *Constellations for Orchestra*, conducted by Takao Kanayama. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC. Through November 4.

The Arman Trio presents Benjamin Lees's *Piano Trio No.2 ("Silent Voices")*. St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Orlando, FL. Through November 8, Weill Recital Hall, New York (NY). "*Silent Voices* . . . was premiered at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC on May 31,1998. . . . Lees other major Holocaust work, *Symphony No. 4 ("Memorial Candles")* was commissioned and premiered by the Dallas Symphony in 1985" [Internet release].

November 3

North American premiere of John Tavener's *The Bridegroom*, plus Pärt's *Fratres*, Britten's *Missa Brevis*, and Stravinsky's *Three Pieces for String Quartet* and *Concertino for String Quartet*. St. Paul's Greek Orthodox Church, Irvine, CA.

San Francisco Symphony in the music of Henze. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Accentus in Poulenc's *Motets Sur Un Temps De Penitence* and *Figure Humaine*, and Dusapin's *Granum Sinapi*. St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, CA.

November 4

*CMS Concert*, including Stacy Garrop's *Trio* and Górecki's *Piano Trio*. Toronto, CA.

Jennifer Ashworth performs Barber's *Nuovoleta*. Holy Names College, 3500 Mountain Blvd, Oakland, CA.

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* performed by the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra. Battle Creek, MI.

The Contemporary Chamber Composers and Players with conductor Roupen Shakarian present three world premieres: *Synergies* by Brad Sherman, *From Mixdown* by Ben McAllister, and *Namaste* by Sarah Bassingthwaighe. The Moore Theatre, Seattle, WA.

November 6

Steve Reich, with Sarah Cahill, discusses his *Writings on Music 1965-2000*. David Tanenbaum and Gyan Riley perform *Nagoya Guitars*. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

November 8

Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players in Steve Reich's *Nagoya Guitars*, *Piano Phase*, *Music for Pieces of Wood*, *Electric Counterpoint*, and *Four Organs*. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Pianist Jon Sakata. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 9

San Francisco Symphony in Davies's *Cross Lane Fair*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Amanda Moody in her *Serial Murderess*, with music by Clark Suprynowitz, and oboist Mark Alburger. Venue 9, San Francisco, CA. Through December 4.

Callithumpian Consort. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 10

Hewlett-Packard Symphony in Anderson's *Minnesota Swale*, Kimmel's *Denali Seasons*, and Gellis's *Duplex*. Oak Room, Hewlett-Packard, Cupertino, CA.

*Lore of Moments*, with Pauline Oliveros. Mills College, Oakland, CA.

West Coast premiere of Mikel Rouse's *Failing Kansas*. Orange County Performing Arts Center, CA.

*Roundtable Discussion: The Music of Gunther Schuller*. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Swarthmore College Wind Ensemble. Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

Seattle Chamber Players and Frederic Rzewski in his *Andante con Moto*, *North American Ballads*, and *Spots*. Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA. "Since 1977 Rzewski has been Professor of Composition at the Conservatoire Royal de Musique in Liege, Belgium. He has also taught at the Yale School of Music, the University of Cincinnati, the State University of New York at Buffalo, the California Institute of the Arts, the University of California at San Diego, Mills College, the Royal Conservatory of the Hague, the Hochschule der Kuenste in Berlin, and the Hochschule fur Musik in Karlsruhe" [Internet release].

November 11

Steve Reich and Musicians in *Clapping Music*, *Electric Counterpoint*, *Drumming (Part 1)*, *Nagoya Marinbas*, and *Sextet*. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Empyrean Ensemble. Julia Morgan Theater, Berkeley, CA. Repeated November 12, Wyatt Pavilion, University of California, Davis.

NACUSA Concert, with the San Jose Choral Project. Daniel Leo Simpson's *Berceuse*, Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Two Songs*, *Hosanna*, and *Flowers by the Sea*; Rosemary Byers's *To a Cat* and *She Walks in Beauty*; Brian Holmes's *Six Lullabies*, *Jolly Jankin*, and *Let Evening Come*; Lori Griswold's *Noel*, Mark Alburger's *Aerial Requiem*; and Owen Lee's *Sanctus*. Art Center, Palo Alto, CA.

*Microthon 2000*, including Kyle Gann's *Do You Know Who I Am?*, Anton Rovner's *Jonny Spielt Auf*, Lou Harrison's *Symphony in Free Style*, Johnny Reinhard's *Urartu* and *Ultra*, Philip Corner's *Two Timeless Tone-Scenes*, the premieres of Harry Partch's *Mendota Night* and *The Incident at Drake's Bay* (1953), and Ivan Wyschnegradsky's *Procession de la Via* and *Meditation*. Quaker Meeting House, New York, NY.

Orchestra 20001 in Gerald Levinson's *For the Morning of the World*, Maurice Delage's *Four Hindu Poems*, Lou Harrison's *Concerto in Slendro*, and Bright Sheng's *Two Poems from the Sung Dynasty*. Philadelphia, PA. Repeated November 12, Swarthmore.

The Esoterics celebrate the 100th birthday of Aaron Copland. Queen Anne Christian Church, Seattle, WA. Repeated November 12.

*Stockholm to Seattle: A Concert of New Electroacoustic Music*. Brechemin Auditorium, Seattle, WA.

November 12

Ellington Society presents a birthday tribute to Billy Strayhorn. Building C-355, Ft. Mason Center, San Francisco, CA.

November 13

NEC Chamber Orchestra. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 14

NEC Contemporary Ensemble. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Chen Yi. Miami University, OH.

November 15

Rebecca Bogart in Griffes's *The Fountain of the Aqua Poala*, Manna-Zucca's *Valse Brillante*, Joplin's *Solace*, Copland's *Rodeo*, and Gould's *Boogie-Woogie Etude*; Patti Deuter in Debussy's *La Plus que Lente*; and Molly Axtmann in her *Preludes, Six-Three*, and *Six-Five*. Strings, Emeryville, CA.

Ensemble 21 with pianist Marilyn Nonken and mezzo soprano Mary Nessinger perform works of Jean Barraqué: *Sonate pour piano* (1952), *Etude* (1953), and *Séquence* (1955). Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY. "The music of Jean Barraqué (1928-1973) is voluptuous, imposing, and beautiful. Ensemble 21 pianist and Artistic Director Marilyn Nonken begins the program with the daunting *Sonate pour piano*, a relentlessly virtuosic work lasting over 40 minutes. . . . The second half of the concert begins with *Etude*, Barraqué's only work for electronic tape. While it is considerably shorter than the composer's other pieces, it reveals his keen ear for timbral color and acute sense of formal balance. Conductor Jeffrey Milarsky will lead the Ensemble 21 players in a performance of the sensual and daring *Séquence*, with the remarkable young mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger. A setting of texts by Nietzsche, *Séquence* is brilliantly scored for a massive battery of percussion, piano, harp, celeste, and strings. Ensemble 21 delivers a rare evening of extraordinary works. Jean Barraqué sang in the choir at Notre Dame and studied music theory with Jean Langlais. In 1948 he attended Olivier Messiaen's classes at the Paris Conservatoire and became deeply influenced by the intellectual atmosphere and the musical inventiveness that Messiaen encouraged. Perhaps most important, however, was Barraqué's contact with serial techniques that he would utilize in the *Sonata* and refine and reinvent throughout his career. After completing the *Sonata*, he became involved with Pierre Schaeffer's electronic studio at Radio France. . . Barraqué's output slowed considerably after his next two pieces, *le temps restitué* (1957, reorchestrated in 1968) and *...au delà du hasard* (1959) both because of personal problems and creative uncertainty. "Art must evolve toward death, must be achieved through 'endless unachievement'" said Barraqué, acknowledging the difficulty of continuing his work. The two pieces that were to follow, *Chant après chant* (1966) and a concerto for clarinet (1968), were Barraqué's last" [Internet release].

American Accent in John Harbison's *Fantasy Duo* for violin and piano, George Perle's *Monody No. 1* for solo flute, Judith Lang Zaimont's *Zones - Piano Trio No. 2*, Sofia Gubaidulina's *Klänge des Waldes* and *Allegro Rustico*, both for flute and piano and Ned Rorem's *Bright Music* for flute, 2 violins, cello and piano. Merkin Hall, New York, NY.

November 16

NEC Wind Ensemble. New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 17

Rodney Lister's *Mama Stamberg's Cranberry Relish*. Morning Edition, NPR.

Choreographer Lily Cai's *String Calligraphy*, with music by Gang Situ performed by the New Century Chamber Orchestra, the Alexander String Quartet, and erhu player Jie-Bing Chen. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

*Nothing*, with Stephen Drury. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* performed by the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. El Paso, TX. Repeated November 18.

November 18

*Bay Area Composer's Symposium*, featuring music of Nancy Bloomer Deussen. San Rafael, CA.

The Northwest Symphony Orchestra presents *Northwest Composers Concert One*. Luther Memorial Lutheran Church.

November 19

Marin Symphony in an all Copland program. San Rafael, CA. Repeated November 21.

*Night of 100 Guitars*. Brant's *Rosewood* and *Crossing the Bridge -- Before You Come to It*, Reich's *Electric Counterpoint* and *Nagoya Guitars*, J.A. Lennon's *Suite for Guitar*, and Riley's *Pie Dad*. Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, Santa Cruz, CA.

Pianist Gabriel Chodos. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Glass's *Double Concerto for Timpani and Orchestra* performed by the American Symphony Orchestra. New York, NY.

November 20

Massachusetts Wind Ensemble. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 22

Gunther Schuller's 75th birthday.

San Francisco Symphony in the music of Rautavaara. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

November 24

Robert Weiss's *Natalia: The Proposal*, with Tisha Page, directed by Harriet March Page. Dominican College, San Rafael, CA. Through December 10.

November 26

Chen Yi's *Momentum* performed by the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. Hong Kong.

Sonos Handbell Ensemble. First Congregational Church, Berkeley, CA.

November 28

Composers, Inc in McLoskey's *Wild Bells* and Ince's *Like, Like Not*. Green Room, Veterans Building, San Francisco, CA.

Veronica Jochum performs Schuller's *Sonata Fantasia*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Fred Ho's *Warrior Sisters*. The Kitchen, New York, NY. Through December 2.

November 29

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Takemitsu's *Ceremonial* and Berg's *Violin Concerto*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through December 2.

Guitarist David Leisner. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

November 30

Nancy Karp + Dancers in the premiere of *KALASAM*, with music by Paul Dresher. Cowell Theatre, San Francisco, CA.

John Corigliano's *Symphony No. 2* performed by the Boston Symphony. Boston, MA.

NEC Honors Orchestra in Schuller's *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

# Chronicle

September 1

Laura Carmichael, in a program including Chen Yi's *Monologue*. Hillside Concerts, Berkeley, CA. Repeated September 8, Meridian Gallery. San Francisco, CA.

September 5

*Equations and Configurations*, with Matt Ingalls. 21 Grand, Oakland, CA.

*John Cage Tribute*. Parish Hall, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, New York, NY.

September 7

*Acustica International SF 2000*. Bill Fontana. Refusalon, San Francisco, CA. Festival through September 30.

September 9

Tan Dun's *Water Passion after St. Matthew*. Stuttgart, Germany.

September 10

Ellington Society presents a program on Duke Ellington's *The River*. Ft. Mason Center, San Francisco, CA.

Carolyn Hawley performs Villa-Lobos's *Rudepoema*. Saturday Afternoon Club, Ukiah, CA.

Flutist Fenwick Smith. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

September 11

Performance and discussion with Philip Glass, including excerpts from his *Symphony No. 5*. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.

*Friends and Enemies of Modern Music*. Rorem's *End of Summer*. CAMI Hall, New York, NY.

September 12

*Composer Spotlight*. Lynette Westendorf. Jack Straw Productions, Seattle, WA.

September 15

*Discovering the Future by Viewing the Past: Remembering Stefan Wolpe and Eduard Steuermann*. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Bargemusic presents Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat*. Fulton Ferry Landing, New York, NY. Repeated September 16.

*Kurt Weill Tribute, I: American Weill*. First Unitarian Church, New York, NY.

September 16

The Esoterics premieres Water's *Sulfer-crested Cockatoos*, Giteck's *Magic Words to Feel Better* (Darius Milhaud in memoriam), and Skirvin's *Delight Song*, and also performs Termis's *Autumn Landscapes* and Chorbajian's *Autumn*. Christ Episcopal Church, Tacoma, WA. Through September 23, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Seattle.

September 17

Lou Harrison's *Mass to St. Anthony*. St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, NY.

September 18

Michael Carenbauer's *Concerto for Zheng, Guitar, and String Quartet*. Artspre, Little Rock, AR.

*New Music Connoisseur Awards*, honoring Cheryl Seltzer, Joel Sachs, Leighton Kerner, Otto Luening, and Laurie Hudicek, with Jack Beeson and Stephen Perillo. Frederick Loewe Theater, New York University, New York, NY.

September 20

*San Francisco Symphony Gala*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. "[The] gala was more festive than most. . . . Thomas . . . was feeling his oats to the point where not even the national anthem was safe. Mouthing the instruction 'Watch me' to the audience, Thomas proceeded to conduct the bejesus out of this inoffensive old tune, spurring the singing patrons to extremes of loud and soft and indulging in a bit of craggy-old-maestro shtick to raise a laugh. . . . Copland's jazzy *Danzón Cubano* led off . . . in a performance that made up in funky, loose-limbed hedonism what it lacked in rhythmic precision. A more outlandish concoction, albeit from a familiar source, was Mozart's *Notturmo in D for Four Orchestras*, K. 286 (269a). This featured one small ensemble on stage under Thomas's baton, with three other groups led by Alasdair Neale, Apo Hsu and Michael Morgan arrayed outside open doors in the lobby and in the upper balcony. The setup was practically identical to that of John Cage's *Dance/4 Orchestras* . . . . Ravel's *Boléro* [was heard] in a big, streamlined and irresistible rendition" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/22/00].

September 21

Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA. Through September 24. "[J]oy is the key to this profoundly religious work" [Octavio Roca, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/23/00].

Steve Reich and Musicians in *Drumming (Part I)*, *Sextet*, and *Music for 18 Musicians*. Reich is presented with the William Schuman Award. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY. "Things both change and do not change. That is perhaps the central lesson of Steve Reich's music . . . . [T]he music they were making [in *Drumming*] was as young as ever. . . . Two concerts [were] given to a packed and enthusiastic audience for the most part younger than *Drumming*. . . . [T]he joyful . . . *Music for 18 Musicians* [was joyfully performed]. . . . One can see and hear how the vibraphone player chimes signals, like courses of bells from a tower, to which the others respond with gearing up or down of harmony, or how musicians move from one instrument to another to bring about changes in the texture. Watched as well as heard, *Music for 18 Musicians* is a kind of ceremony, voiced in repeating bits of tune, in harmonic progressions, in sumptuous sonorities, in time. A ceremony enjoins submission to order, and *Music for 18 Musicians* looks and sounds like human clockwork. But this is not frightening. When engaged in with full heart, vigor and alertness by everyone, as here, the detailed plan is not a confinement but a recipe for exuberance. The wheels of the clock go around smoothly at their different rates: a few seconds for a measure, an hour for the giant cycle that is the entire work. And the passage of time is not baneful but exhilarating" [Paul Griffiths, *The New York Times*, 9/26/00].

September 22

Music of Milhaud, Debussy, Ravel, and Oliveros. Mills College, Oakland, CA.

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Waxman's *Carmen Fantasy* and Ravel's *Bolero*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Repeated September 23.

Pianist Jeffrey Biegel and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra under the Music Direction of Jesus Lopez Cobos present the world premiere performances of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*. Music Hall, Cincinnati, OH. Repeated September 23. "The *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* grew out of discussions in 1998 between pianist Jeffrey Biegel and arts consultant Jeffrey James regarding Mr. Biegel's interest in commissioning new music. Then, in January 1999, Mr. Biegel, having known and admired the music of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, decided to contact the composer. . . . [The] project team has . . . booked 27 orchestras across the U.S. -- from Maine's Bangor Symphony to California's San Luis Obispo Symphony" [Internet release].

September 23

*Acustica International SF 2000. Intermedia Program.* Sani's *Water Memories*, Riessler's *Fever*, Curran's *Erat Verbum John* (dedicated to John Cage), and Cage's *Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake*. Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco, CA

*Acustica International SF 2000. Tom Marioni and John Cage. Beer Drinking Sonata* (with percussion) for 13 players, and *4'33"*. Hawthorne Lane Bar, San Francisco, CA

Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA.

*Zoom: Composers Close Up.* David Lang's *Memory Pieces* and *Psalms Without Words*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

New Juilliard Ensemble. Juilliard Theater, New York, NY.

Steve Reich and Musicians in *Music for Pieces of Wood*, *Different Trains*, and *Music for 18 Musicians*. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

September 24

*Acustica International SF 2000. Audio-Vision Program*, including Thom's *Ear Circus Number One* and the Henry/Ruttman *La Ville / Die Stadt. Metropolis Paris - Berlin* Dolby Laboratories, San Francisco, CA

*Acustica International SF 2000. Sounds of All Kinds from DADA to NOW*, including the Tzara / Huelsenbeck / Janko *L'amiral cherche une maison à louer*, Kandisky's *Klänge / Sounds*, and Amirkhanian's *Son of Metropolis San Francisco*. San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

Cellist Alexei Romanenko. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

September 25

104th anniversary of the birth of Roberto Gerhard.

94th anniversary of the birth of Dmitri Shostakovich. Russia.

*Two Generations of the Avant-Garde.* Wolff's *Trio for Violin, Piano, and Percussion* and Zorn's *Music for Children* and *Le Momo*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Nashville Symphony in Ives's *Symphony No. 2* and Mark O'Conner's *Double Violin Concerto*, with the composer and Nadia Salerno-Sonnenberg. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "Nashville has barely registered on the radar of classical music listeners. But since 1983 Kenneth Schermerhorn has been building the Nashville Symphony into a solid, disciplined ensemble, and when the orchestra made its Carnegie Hall debut [with this concert] it gave a performance that was mostly a knockout. . . . It played the Ives . . . like the grand Romantic symphony it actually is, Ives's image as a revolutionary notwithstanding. In the first movement, particularly, there were stretches that could almost have been Vaughan Williams. That said, when Ivesian parody did emerge, in the finale, Mr. Schermerhorn and his players ran with it, but without overstating it. . . . [In the O'Conner] it was a while before folk fiddling gave way to anything even glancingly jazzy. A 30-minute work in three movements, it was pleasant enough, and a crowd-pleaser. It touched on blues figures in its middle movement and big band jazz in its finale. The brass excelled here . . . . Mostly, though, the focus was on the extended cadenzas, in which Mr. O'Connor and Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg gamely traded virtuosic lines. The format was that of a jam session in which soloists seek to outdo each other. Exactly what that means when both soloists' lines are tightly scripted is difficult to say: this was more of a staged fistfight than a true barroom brawl" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 9/28/00].

September 26

Flutist Paula Robison. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

September 27

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 4* and Copland's *Symphony No. 3*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through September 30. "The four movement Villa-Lobos . . . [was] magnificent . . . . The strings brought an unnerving lushness to the opening movement, and Thomas conducted with plenty of rhythmic flair throughout" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/29/00].

*American Composers Forum: Collaborations*, with Lisa Bielawa. The Kitchen, New York, NY. Repeated September 28.

Corigliano's *Etude Fantasy*. Paul Hall, New York, NY.

September 28

NewEar in George Crumb's *Voice of the Whale*. Kansas City, MO.

*Composer Portrait: Louis Andriessen*. Ensemble Sospeso in *New Math(s)*, *Hout*, and *Le Voile du Bonheur*. New York, NY.

Milton Babbitt's *All Set*. Lincoln Center, New York, NY.

Juilliard Orchestra. Juilliard Theater, New York, NY.

September 30

Rockford Symphony Orchestra performs Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*. Rockford, IL.

# 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 an opera (*Uncle Vanya*) and an oratorio (*The Creation*).

DAVID CLEARY's music has been played throughout the U.S. and abroad, including performances at Tanglewood and by Alea II and Dinosaur Annex. A member of Composers in Red Sneaker, he has won many awards and grants, including the Harvey Gaul Contest, an Ella Lyman Cabot Trust Grant, and a MacDowell residence. He is a staff critic for The New Music Connoisseur and 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC. His article on composing careers is published by Gale Research and he has contributed CD reviews to the latest *All Music Guide to Rock*. His music appears on the Centaur and Vienna Modern Masters labels, and his bio may be found in many *Who's Who* books.

LAURIE HUDICEK began her musical education at the age of five. In 1988 she began studying at the Peabody Preparatory School where she was a student of Frances Cheng-Koors. She completed the school's certificate program in 1991. In 1995, Hudicek graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from St. Mary's College of Maryland where she studied with Brian Ganz and focused on twentieth-century repertoire with Eliza Garth. In 1998, she received her Master's of Music degree in Piano Performance from the University of Maryland while studying with Bradford Gowen. Hudicek has won awards from several institutions including the Maryland State Music Teacher's Association (1989, 1990), and the Arts Alliance of St. Mary's College (1994). She was a prize winner in the Crane Festival of New Music National Solo Performers Competition in April 1995, and participated in the first Annual Institute for Contemporary Music Performance Summer Master Session in Buffalo, NY in the same year. Hudicek continues to study with Gowen while in the Doctoral program at the University of Maryland, where she has a teaching assistantship. She focuses on the performance of contemporary piano music and has performed several masterpieces of this century including volumes I and II of George Crumb's *Makrokosmos* for solo piano and volume IV for piano four-hands. Hudicek had been on the piano faculty of St. Mary's College of Maryland (1995-96) and is currently on the piano faculty of the Levine School of Music in Washington, D. C.

JOHN RODNEY LISTER is a Boston-based music critic associated with Harvard University.

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](http://www.msu.edu/user/gualtie3) -- which has also been translated into Russian and appears in Intellectual Forum.