

# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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DECEMBER 2000

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21ST-CENTURY MUSIC is published monthly by 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, P.O. Box 2842, San Anselmo, CA 94960.

Subscription rates in the U.S. are \$84.00 (print) and \$42.00 (e-mail) per year; subscribers to the print version elsewhere should add \$36.00 for postage. Single copies of the current volume and back issues are \$8.00 (print) and \$4.00 (e-mail). Large back orders must be ordered by volume and be pre-paid. Please allow one month for receipt of first issue. Domestic claims for non-receipt of issues should be made within 90 days of the month of publication, overseas claims within 180 days. Thereafter, the regular back issue rate will be charged for replacement. Overseas delivery is not guaranteed. Send orders to 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, P.O. Box 2842, San Anselmo, CA 94960. e-mail: mus21stc@aol.com.

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# Gunther Schuller at 75

SCOTT MENHINICK

On November 22, 2000, multi-faceted composer, conductor, author, and purveyor of independent music Gunther Schuller celebrated his 75th birthday. Concerts, radio tributes, and other celebrations are planned through 2001 to honor the Pulitzer Prize winner's landmark year.

Schuller, who has left indelible marks on many different aspects of 20th-century music, began as a French horn player in a major symphony at 17. Over the next 60 years, he would perform on landmark jazz and classical recordings, become one of the foremost American composers of his generation, alter the course of music education, help resurrect the music of Scott Joplin, conduct major orchestras around the world, author critically-acclaimed scholarly works, and create publishing companies and an independent record label to support the work of under-appreciated musicians.

Because he has worked behind the scenes in many cases to push jazz and classical music forward, Schuller has forgone the popularity of his more commercial contemporaries. Although he has won major honors like the Grammy, Pulitzer, and MacArthur Genius Award, most of Schuller's efforts have taken place outside the vision of the casual music listener. For the discerning, however, Schuller's work with the likes of Leonard Bernstein, Ornette Coleman, Aaron Copland, Miles Davis, Eric Dolphy, Gil Evans, Charles Mingus, and Arturo Toscanini created classic moments which changed the face of modern music.

Now one of the elder statesmen of post-World War II composers, Schuller lives the dichotomy of outspoken critic of the status quo and member of the upper-echelons of the musical academy. Though time and a unique career have allowed him to rise to some of the most prestigious positions in music, his inclusive vision of quality music and penchant for sharp-edged commentary are still in tact.

In spite of his reputation as a literalist, Schuller continues to open doors for those who refuse to work within easily classified categories. He also has worked with such musicians as Elvis Costello and Frank Zappa while somehow being dismissed as a traditionalist. Balancing a love for masters like Beethoven with an ear for innovative new talent, Schuller answers his detractors with a simply stated ethos: "My only ideology is quality."

Born in 1925 on the Day of St. Cecilia, the Patron Saint of music, Gunther Schuller is now one of the established greats of both post-war jazz musicians and 20th-century American composers. An inaugural member of the American Classical Music Hall of Fame and winner of the DownBeat Lifetime Achievement Award, his careers as composer, conductor, educator, historian, and music advocate have each altered the landscape of contemporary music as we know it.

Schuller's musical odyssey began in 1942 with Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony when he was chosen as an extra French horn player for the maestro's American premiere of Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7*. After six months with the American Ballet Theater Orchestra, under Antal Dorati in 1943, Schuller was named principal French horn of the Cincinnati Symphony. It was in Cincinnati that Schuller would first meet Duke Ellington and recognize the compositional potential of jazz.

Two years later he would join the prestigious Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, playing bebop licks during warm ups and frequenting jazz clubs at night. Soon he was playing on seminal jazz albums, like *The Birth of the Cool* and *Porgy and Bess* with Miles Davis and Gil Evans, and combining jazz and classical forms in his own compositions, like *Symphonic Tribute to Duke Ellington* and *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee*. By the time he retired his French horn to focus on composing in 1963, Schuller had laid the foundation for the third stream movement with collaborators like Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, and John Lewis. Although third stream's attempt to splice together complex composition and virtuoso improvisation faltered with audiences and critics, endorsements of his composing from people like Leonard Bernstein propelled him to new heights in the classical arena. Schuller's works have been premiered by orchestras around the world and recognized with many honors, most notably the Pulitzer Prize and MacArthur Genius Award.

His work as an educator, at institutions like the Manhattan School of Music, Yale University, and the landmark Lenox School of Jazz, culminated in ten years as President of Boston's New England Conservatory (1967-77). He used this position, and his nearly twenty-five year tenure at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, to legitimize jazz as a serious music and generate interest in ragtime, classic jazz, and contemporary classical music. Never one to rest on his laurels, Schuller uses his accumulated economic and critical leverage to help others whose innovative work might otherwise remain unheard. Margun Music and GunMar Music published over 1000 works by diverse artists like William Russo, Alec Wilder, and Steve Lacy. GM Recordings has released over 100 uncompromising jazz and classical recordings, including many world premieres, debuts, and historical performances. The independent label will celebrate a rare 20th anniversary in 2001. Still active as a world-traveling composer and conductor -- winning both the Pulitzer and the DownBeat Critics Poll Jazz Album of the Year in the mid-90's -- Schuller is also one of the foremost experts on many artists and musical forms he has worked with over the past 60 years. His books, like *The Swing Era* and *The Compleat Conductor*, are praised for their honesty and depth of perspective. In Gunther Schuller's eyes, music is not about commercial success or a hierarchy of genres, but an understanding of the past that leads to innovation and new visions of the future.

# A Dialogue with Terry Riley

DONALD M. WILSON

WILSON: Could you tell us about your experiences at the University of California, Berkeley?

RILEY: I was a student at U.C. Berkeley in 1961. At that time there were a lot of interesting students -- Pauline Oliveros, La Monte Young, Douglas Leedy. I was quite influenced by serial works and was trying to write that way. But I was even more influenced by La Monte, whose slow-moving music was like being on a space station and waiting to get to the next planet. So my thesis was about half tonal and half serial. People would say, "What are you trying to do here?" I always liked popular forms of music as well, and pop piano was always something I had to do. Much of popular music is beautifully organized.

WILSON: You have also been influenced by non-Western music.

RILEY: The lines between different forms of music began to blur. After Berkeley, I ended up living in Spain, near Morocco. I felt I had to incorporate such devices as modes and repetitive chords in music. So my first contacts were with North African music.

WILSON: Did *In C* come to you gradually?

RILEY: *In C* arrived quickly and all intact. It was the kind of inspiration that composers often just dream about.

WILSON: What about the pulse in *In C*?

RILEY: Steve Reich suggested we put a pulse in, perhaps because he was a drummer as well as a composer! But a version of *In C* at the University of Hartford was very beautiful without the pulse -- slow and romantic.

WILSON: Did *In C* influence Reich's music?

RILEY: Steve's music at the time sounded a bit like free jazz. With *In C*, we all knew something new was in the air. It was a part of a new community spirit.

WILSON: You met Philip Glass some time after this?

RILEY: I came to New York in 1965. Maybe a year later I was doing a seminar at my house (this was a program that New York University established) and Philip came to one of these and mentioned that he was doing music along similar lines.

WILSON: Do you look back fondly at the 60's?

RILEY: Of all the years that I've lived, the 60's felt most like a renaissance. The 50's felt very repressive. It was during the 60's that things broke through.

WILSON: Can you speak a bit on improvisation?

RILEY: As an improviser, you're listening along with the audience. When one note is sounded, there are expectations about what the next note should be.

WILSON: What do you do when you hit the wrong note?

RILEY: Keep moving!

WILSON: You have played not only solo piano but also solo saxophone.

RILEY: The sound of the sax is among the most powerful around. I was listening to John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins a lot in the mid-60's. I was also working with a saxophone player named Sonny Lewis (with whom I had previously worked in Europe), but by this time, I realized that I needed to be the saxophonist in *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band* myself.

WILSON: Which was recorded with your keyboard piece *A Rainbow in Curved Air*.

RILEY: Yes. I only had two pieces in the late 60's: *Rainbow* and *Poppy*. I'd play them at every concert and they would grow and change. Keyboard and sax were my main vehicles at that time.

WILSON: Do you still write for saxophone?

RILEY: Yes. I'm now working on a third sax quartet.

WILSON: What can you tell us about *Tread on the Trail*?

RILEY: Before *Tread on the Trail*, I heard a Sonny Rollins concert. He had a new band, and he played solo for about 10 minutes and then he just nodded his head to the other players. They had no idea what to do, but they were great musicians and did incredible stuff. *Tread on the Trail* had nothing to do with what that group sounded like that night, but nevertheless it was about what happened.

WILSON: Any advice for young composers?

RILEY: Go out and take a walk and enjoy the sunshine every day you can. And remember: if you hit your head against the wall once, you're a madman; if you keep hitting your head against the wall, you're a genius!

# Concert Reviews

## Four Massachusetts Miniatures

### DAVID CLEARY

Janus 21 Ensemble. January 2, Edward M. Pickman Hall, Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA.

Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston. January 9, Sanders Theatre, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Opera Department, Longy School of Music, March 10, Edward M. Pickman Hall, Cambridge, MA. Also March 11.

Novae. April 1, Lindsey Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Boston, MA.

Boston's new-music new year was ushered in by two of the best recent triadic works heard in some time. *Lamentations of Shinran* (1998 / 1999), by Richard St. Clair, is scored for mezzo-soprano, tenor, and string quartet. This nearly half-hour long setting of 13th-century Buddhist poems proves fascinating from start to finish, exhibiting numerous deeply-felt variants on oriental sensitivity and exquisite melancholy. The performance, given January 2 by the Janus 21 Ensemble, was first-rate; singers Jane Struss and Michael Calmes effectively executed a wide gamut of vocal colors ranging from full-throated singing to reserved incantation.

Performed January 9 by the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, Michael Gandolfi's *Y2K Compliant* (1999) is multi-hued and engaging without being derivative or pandering. Each of the work's movements derives from a particular relationship between computers and music composition (loops, pads, reverb). While triadic, the chord progressions are often unusual and unexpected; gesture and pacing are economic and the work flows smoothly. Guest conductor Yoichi Udagawa led the players in a strong, well-considered rendition.

The Longy School's Opera Department presented evenings of American opera excerpts on March 10 and 11, including semi-staged selections from Eric Sawyer's work-in-progress *Our American Cousin*. The duet and two arias performed suggest a dissonant updating of Americana-styled works in the genre (think Schuman or Menotti), exhibiting tellingly focused moods, a solid dramatic sense, excellent formal balance, and idiomatic vocal writing. Especially effective were the four choral excerpts -- lean, succinct, and vivid. The student performers were both accomplished and enthusiastic.

Novae, a chamber choral group devoted to performing music of the 20th and 21st centuries performed Beth Denisch's *Constantly Risking Absurdity* (1992). The work's opening morphs gradually from hushed whispers into delicious vocal textures that utilize whole tone fragments and juicy post-romantic chords in a moderately dissonant context. Text setting (of a poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti) and structural proportions are top-notch. Raymond E. Fahrner conducted the run-through with sensitivity and good attention to timbre and detail.

## Boston Music Alive

### DAVID CLEARY

Boston Musica Viva. March 17, Tsai Performance Center, Boston University, Boston, MA.

College football's venerable Rose Bowl game is sometimes referred to as "the granddaddy of them all." Beantown's new music analogue is Boston Musica Viva, founded in 1969 and still going strong. The group's local composers concert was a highlight of the current season, featuring recently commissioned works by Lee Hyla and Andy Vores.

Vores's *Umberhulk* (2000) derives its title from the name of a choleric, subterranean-dwelling monster in a fantasy role-playing game -- and in many ways, the work is as teratoid as its namesake. As one might expect from music thus inspired, low tessitura instruments such as viola, cello, bass flute, and bass clarinet figure prominently. Its first half unfolds in a willfully strange, at times seemingly arbitrary manner, though later sections become more directional and focused, incorporating hints of minimalism. One suspects, however, that a deeper meaning lurks beneath all the madness. While a bit puzzled, this reviewer was not displeased and would like the opportunity to hear the piece again.

*Lives of the Saints* (1998-2000), by Hyla, received its first complete performance, Part One having been presented by this group last year. The work has a few things in common with Bernard Rands's *Canti del Sole*; both are lengthy entities employing polyglot texts scored for solo voice and mid-sized chamber ensemble. They share one other similarity as well --both are terrific pieces, major and important contributions to the repertoire. Hyla sets prose written by various Medieval saints and martyrs as well as from Dante's *Divine Comedy* --and he chooses wisely, normally utilizing material showing its ascetic speakers wrestling with their faith in the face of fleshly desires and spiritual doubts. The music manages to convincingly suggest its speakers' dilemmas, expertly showcasing a wide range of moods (by turns passionate, introspective, intense, and ecstatic) in the process; it also neatly balances these contrasting sections within a nicely paced overall framework. Both vocal and instrumental writing are highly effective here, with the text's conversational-style setting helping to humanize its subjects still further. The group also revived a choice 1988 commission, Peter Lieberon's *Raising the Gaze*. This brief, well-wrought work weaves pentatonic snippets and a bouncy, sociable energy into a dissonant East Coast ethos. It pleased greatly.

Performances were excellent, as one has come to expect over the years from this world-class ensemble. Conductor Richard Pittman's charges played with precision, intelligence, energy, and flair. Mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger sang Hyla's piece well, exhibiting fine stage presence, satisfactory diction, and a creamy sound quality devoid of pretense. The odd acoustics of this hall, artificially enhanced with implanted microphones, occasionally wreak havoc upon the best-balanced playing; unfortunately, it did so in the Hyla, resulting in the singer sometimes being covered in loud passages. Fortunately, the piece came across well despite these difficulties.

Boston Musica Viva may indeed be the grandpa of local contemporary music ensembles, but there's no danger whatsoever of the group going out to pasture. Bravos go to Pittman and his stellar players.

## Alea's Last Millennium

### DAVID CLEARY

Alea III. March 18, Tsai Performance Center, Boston University, Boston, MA.

This concert was the last in an ambitious series called *The Millennium Project*. Each year of the 1990's saw Alea III present a concert containing representative pieces from each decade of our fading century, preceded by a panel talk on key musical aspects of that decade. At this evening's pre-concert lecture, guests Martin Brody and Mario Davidovsky discussed salient issues of the 1990's music scene, such as the rise and fall of opera commissions, the fragmentation of new music's audience into ever smaller segments, and the acceptance of wide-ranging styles by the decade's composers. The concert itself presented an intriguing cross-section of that plurality.

Christopher Rouse's orchestral works are probably the best-known part of his portfolio; hearing his mixed septet *Compline* proved enlightening. While characteristic of his other music in its leisurely unfolding and at times introspective writing, this is for the most part a surprisingly vibrant, upbeat work, inspired in part by Rome's ringing bells and energetic bustle. The piece is formally loose and episodic, but its sections are satisfyingly paced. It was good to hear. Davidovsky's work-in-progress *Simple Dances* is neither simple nor a true set of dances. These short movements are in fact deconstructions of dance figures as filtered through a non-triadic East Coast gestural world. Furthermore, these are not simple pieces --rather, they are subtle, sophisticated, finely wrought miniatures that perfectly balance craft and charm. Two solo compositions -- one for standard flute, the other for its alto counterpart—proved to be worthwhile listens. Henri Lazarof's two-movement *Solo for Alto Flute* is velvety and relaxed, an improvisational sounding delight that shows off its instrument's buttery sound to fullest advantage.

*Soliloquy* by Lowell Liebermann by rights shouldn't work at all, its square rhythmic feel and rather fusty sequential writing theoretically being an invitation to tedium. What saves the work is its warm, irresistible sound world and strong sense of form and balance. Of all the pieces presented, the one most representative of the "anything goes" aesthetic of the 1990's is Theodore Antoniou's *Piano Concerto*. Dense clusters, dissonant sonorities, romantic passages skirting the edge of tonality, folk-like figures, ostinati, textural material, lush melodies, gruff orchestral punctuations, arching string octaves, trombone glissandi, and Aeolian-harp piano effects all somehow manage to coexist here. The piece's individual slant on traditional forms (sonata, scherzo, passacaglia, and variations) proves riveting, though the ambitious, lengthy last movement comes perilously close to overwhelming its neighbors. That the piece not only holds together but also proves effective is a tribute to Antoniou's eclectic, dramatic, and highly personal compositional vision.

Performances were generally good, with Antoniou ably conducting the three ensemble works. Two players merit special citation here. Julia Scolnik gave the two flute pieces excellently, notably displaying a lovely, controlled tone and expert melodic shaping. Pianist Anthony DiBonaventura's bravura rendition of the solo part in the Antoniou was profoundly impressive; he traversed its myriad special effects and formidable technical difficulties with style and aplomb.

In short, this evening worked as both history lesson and living concert. Well done.

## Aurosdammerung

### DAVID CLEARY

Auros Group for New Music. April 1, First and Second Church, Boston, MA.

The Auros Ensemble's season-ender was subtitled *Twilight Fantasy* -- an idea rather unusual for a new music concert. With so many recent composers seemingly bent on writing outsized grand statements, it was refreshing to hear crepuscular pieces with less lofty surface ambitions. But fortunately, the group did not dish up lazy background music for dusk picnics; these subtle pieces challenged the listener.

Winner of this year's Auros Composition Contest, *Im Zwielicht* by John Van Buren, contains many surprises beneath an understated exterior. Its first movement, entitled "Nocturne," first juxtaposes and then mixes obsessive fragmented material and static tonal figures while still preserving the music's moonlit feel. The following "Humoresque" is a fractured, yet tasteful deconstruction of carnival-like music. And the concluding "Toccatina" is anything but single-mindedly propulsive -- in fact, the movement lurches into intriguing cul-de-sacs and down numerous fascinating alleyways. Flutist Susan Hampton, violinist David Santucci, and cellist Emmanuel Feldman gave a performance that may have seemed wan to the casual listener but in fact nicely put forth the subtle ethos of this well-made, effective piece.

After intermission, Hampton and Feldman returned to give a more demonstrative presentation of Barbara Kolb's *Extremes*. Its two movements begin with melodic materials that respectively feature the flute and cello and then engage both instruments on more equal terms. While the work's structural feel is loose and improvisatory (at times mildly suggesting non-Western approaches), its melodic shaping proves very fetching.

Each of the *Five Scenes for Vibraphone* by Stefan Hakenberg bears a title evocative of a particular mood and place. These are charming, unpretentious entities that effectively explore a number of colorful special effects (including use of stick handle strokes, pitch bending, and varied vibrato settings). But the beauty here is not just surface-thick—each "scene" is effectively structured and the five movements fit together to form a well-balanced whole. Robert Schulz played it with skill and sensitivity.

George Rochberg's music from the 1980's is usually described as belonging to the tonal new-romantic school. Like many generalizations, this one has its exceptions. His *Octet: A Grand Fantasia* in fact inhabits a surprisingly dissonant world steeped in quartal harmonies, though its rhythmic shapes often show kinship with late 19th-century music. The work's 12 movements suggest character pieces, though their mood is often dark and sometimes intense. And while locally unfolding passages at times veer towards the block-like, the instrumental writing is highly effective and long range pacing is simply masterful. It's a fine listen. Conductor Neal Hampton led a terrific performance loaded with accomplished solo playing from all concerned.

Bravos go to Auros for a concert proving that nocturnal mood music can satisfy the mind as well as the emotions.

# Church of the Annexed Dinosaurs

## DAVID CLEARY

Dinosaur Annex Ensemble. April 30, First and Second Church, Boston, MA.

Boston has seen many excellent new music flute players over the past number of years; names such as Randolph Bowman, Jean DeMart, Christine Fish, John Heiss, Julie Scolnik, and Fenwick Smith come to mind immediately. Tonight's Dinosaur Annex concert showed conclusively that Sue-Ellen Herschman-Tcherepnin belongs with the best contemporary music flautists Boston has seen over the last thirty years or so.

The program was a joy from start to finish. Elena Ruehr's commissioned work *The Law of Floating Objects* (2000) for flute/piccolo and tape makes an extraordinary impression, being a smart reinterpretation of phase-oriented process music that is both masterfully crafted and magically beautiful to hear. The tape part consists of overlaid flute lines that are first cousins to the alto flute melodies from *The Rite of Spring*, all underpinned with subtle percussive sounds. But these lines are not carbon copies of each other, their subtle differences providing lots of listening interest. And the soloist's interwoven part, surfacing and submerging as it unfolds, provides yet another dimension to the already fascinating tape textures.

*Yoku Mireba* (1976/1993), a flute, cello, and piano trio by Tod Machover, shows a wealth of mood and texture over its not inconsiderable duration-but throughout, it proves both energetic and marvelously written for its players. And its wide-ranging harmonic language expertly balances sonorities ranging from Impressionist verticals to thick clusters. Hilary Tann's flute/viola/harp entry *From the Song of Amergin* (1995) nicely internalizes folk and Far Eastern idioms into a distinctly personal style. The work is decorative yet sturdy and handles its unabashedly tonal language in a strikingly effective manner. *Altars Altered* (1998), a flute and piano duo by Paul Elwood, shows fetching kinship to Messiaen and Takemitsu without being a slavish imitation. Its flute writing nicely traverses mysterious, colorful, and busy sections. And all four compositions show convincing, ingenious ways of delineating form without resorting to traditional models.

Other pieces effectively demonstrate humorous, practical, or political concerns. Ivan Tcherepnin's *Prelude and March* (1981), scored for flute and harp, was written for a friend's wedding. The work projects a quiet, simple nobility, pointedly demonstrating that "music for use" need not be perfunctory or dull. *Peace March (Stop Using Uranium)* (1984) by Christian Wolff deftly derives its material from the song "Hey Ho, Nobody Home," a tune often sung with anti-nuclear-power lyrics during 1970's protests. It's an elusive, sometimes motor-like selection that does not share the fascination most composers have with the bass flute's sumptuous low notes-an odd, but compelling listen. David Jaggard's *Quartet* (1989), scored for flute, clarinet, violin, and cello, and Randall Woolf's *Quicksilver* (1992), a flute/violin pairing, are both tail-pulls of the highest order. The former begins with an almost saccharine section suggestive of bargain-basement Debussy and then gleefully shoves this material through a fun-house mirror of late 20th-century techniques, including aleatory, process, and pointillism. If the Jaggard is a musical analog to the stone-faced, surreal lunacy of Buster Keaton, Woolf's piece is like a vintage Three Stooges romp. Its frantically showy writing, replete with jump cuts and non-sequiturs, is a clever send-up of virtuoso display pieces. And the work's feisty energy exhibits the craziness of an all-stops-out custard pie fight. Fine listens all.

Herschman-Tcherepnin's playing on all four major members of the flute family was terrific. Her tone is centered and substantive, able to project limpid and gutsy music (and everything in between) with equal effectiveness. Her technique is fleet-footed and clean, eminently capable of traversing the fastest passages with ease. As soloist, she shows a wonderful sense of melodic shaping and projects a consummately professional, yet warmly appealing stage persona. Her chamber music playing is sensitive and highly accomplished. Ensemble regulars Anne Black (viola), Michael Curry (cello), Diane Heffner (clarinet), and Cyrus Stevens (violin), joined by guests Nina Kellman (harp) and John McDonald (piano), assisted ably.

## Water! Steam! Movement! Sound!

### DAVID CLEARY

*Water! Steam! Movement! Sound!*, with Ellen Band. May 4, Mobius, Boston, MA. Through May 6.

Boston has little to compare with New York's experimental downtown music and performance art scene. Mobius represents one of the few venues where such items consistently find a hospitable home. Their most recent offering, built around the theme of water in its liquid and gaseous forms, proved to be a most enjoyable entity and prominently featured sound art by Ellen Band.

Band's oeuvre, ultimately tracing its roots back to that of musique concrète by Pierre Henri and Edgard Varèse, is usually built from sophisticated overlays and juxtapositions of acoustic-based sounds derived from single sources. *Tiny Chorus* is an excellent example, taking all its material from teakettles that boil and whistle and thermos jugs that gurgle and spit. Surprisingly, no electronic alterations are imposed on the sounds here -- variety is obtained by recording the noisemaking items at differing levels and distances. And this variety of sounds is startling; Band's thermos jugs seem like exotic, almost otherworldly entities. The work is also ably constructed, with a sensitive feel for texture and contrast. It even comes to a satisfying close with a "grand finale" of sorts in which most of the sounds appearing thus far are piled onto each other, analogous to a showy stretto in a fugal coda. It's a very compelling listen.

Band's musical contribution to the collaborative work *Magnetat Animism/Radiatore*, is even more single-minded in approach, but no less enjoyable. Built almost entirely from overlaid steam radiator sounds, this sound-art entity inches its way from wispy, elusive hissing to a merry, clangorous din. Performance movement artist Nancy Adams concocted a delightful visual piece to accompany it. Adams slowly emerged, legs first, as a black-clad goddess of steam from behind a curtain over an old radiator. Her frantic, yet methodical depiction of heat spreading throughout the room, suggested by swinging around buckets of hot water and festooning chains from the ceiling, vaguely reminded this reviewer of the novelty-act fellow from the Ed Sullivan Show who would not rest until he had achieved fifty plates spinning on sticks all at once. The whole thing was earnest, at times humorously awkward in an intentional way, and always highly endearing.

*Water Closet*, a performance art piece choreographed by Marcela Correa and Cecilia Andrade and presented by Correa and Josie Caceres, was also very effective. It continued the evening's fascination with all things aqueous, centered around a portable metal tub and bowls of water. Visually, the work was graceful and very sensual, often playful but at times mysterious or stormy in nature. Two especially memorable dance-like sections, in which the performers rolled and spun about the floor, strongly suggested a stylized take on synchronized swimming. The accompanying taped music by Uakti and Nana Vasconcelos, containing percussive sounds, whistling, Latin idioms, and faux-Bach, provided a serviceable enough backdrop.

In a local music scene dominated by standard concert music presentations, it is good to know more avant-garde places like Mobius can flourish. Received with thanks.

## Venus and Adonis and Henze

JAMES L. PAULK

American premiere of Hans Werner Henze's *Venus and Adonis*. July 29, Santa Fe, NM.

*Venus and Adonis* is the sixth opera by Hans Werner Henze to have its American premiere here at Santa Fe. The city's nickname is "the city different," and Santa Fe Opera might well be called "the opera company different." Virtually every major company in America has eschewed new works from European and non-tonal composers, instead favoring "soundtrack operas" by Americans. But John Crosby, who operated this company from its inception, has made Santa Fe the principal American home for the world's more challenging and imaginative composers. In doing so, he has created an audience here that fills the opera house on such nights as this. The opera, which had its premiere in Munich in 1997, is, at 70 minutes, Henze's shortest, but perhaps his most complex. The libretto, by Hans-Ulrich Treichel, is based on Shakespeare's poem, and is divided into 17 scenes. There is an opera within an opera within an opera. Each of the main characters in this triangle has a dancer double, and the opera switches between original Shakespeare, the singers performing it, and the dancers portraying the singers, who often interact with them as well. And the singers sometimes become observers, commenting on the action. This might sound a bit contrived and pretentious, but in the hands of Treichel and Henze, and with assistance from Shakespeare, what we get is pure poetry. Henze's score is his most distilled to date. He writes on the edge of tonality, bringing to mind the music of Alban Berg or some of Richard Strauss's most dissonant sounds. Henze's orchestration now ranks among the world's best, and in this case he has gone all out, with the orchestra divided into three sections, one for each of the principal characters. There is such a richness of musical expression here... musical ideas come and go with a rapidity reminiscent of Verdi's *Falstaff*.

The production, by Alfred Kirchner, apparently differs substantially from the Munich premiere. With an elegant garret-like set by John Conklin and sophisticated choreography by Ron Thornhill, the singers and dancers are all on the same level together. And these are singers who know how to act. There is no more dramatically potent singer than American soprano Lauren Flanigan, whose mesmerizing body language compliments the expressiveness of her voice, and her Prima Donna/Venus is unforgettable. A surprise last-minute substitute, tenor Christopher Ventris was a sensitive Clemente/Adonis, the same role he created in Munich. And bass-baritone Stephen West brought just the right amount of sarcastic edge to the role of Hero-player/Mars. The principal dancers were so good as to be distracting, especially Brock VonDrehle Labrenz as Venus. Peter Matia and Sarita Allen portrayed Mars and Venus, respectively. Richard Bradshaw conducted with energy and precision. The opera was performed in German with English seat-back titles.

## More Dinosaurs

DAVID CLEARY

Dinosaur Annex Ensemble. September 16, Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

September 16's Dinosaur Annex Ensemble concert could have been subtitled "Obsession Junction," as all the works presented went far beyond simple tautness of idea to demonstrate varying degrees of manic focus. But for the most part, the pieces worked well.

*Stomp* (1988) for ten players, by Scott Lindroth, is terrific, an effervescent toccata cast in a post-Copland harmonic language that exhibits both tail-wagging friendliness and gutsy vigor. Containing a flawless sense of structure and balance, its motivic construction is as tight as strung piano wire. Arthur Levering's concerto for piano and chamber orchestra *Catena* (2000) is, if anything, even more intensely driven and nervous in feel. Showing sonic kinship to the swirling, colorful *oeuvre* of Takemitsu and Boulez, this fine piece contains much repetition of material but manages to keep its fascination level high by subtly varying lengths of segments and intermixing ideas in perpetually surprising ways. Soloist Donald Berman performed his challenging part wonderfully well. *Tavistock* (1996) by Peter Homans exhibits an entirely different kind of preoccupation, concerning itself with the depiction of a bucolic English scene. Perhaps not surprisingly, the influence of Delius and the British tweed-jacket school of composers (think Malcolm Arnold *et. al.*) can be detected here. It comes across as sprawling and bloodless, though some sections -- most notably the ending -- are lovely. Flutist Jacqueline DeVoe and clarinetist Katherine V. Matasy, ably backed by a string orchestra, played with warmth and skill.

Selections by two elder statesmen Europeans rounded out the program. *Ramifications* (1968-69) by György Ligeti fortunately proves much more interesting than its dry program notes might suggest. The first half or so of the piece glacially but bewitchingly oozes from one dense quarter-tone based cluster to another (essentially a string orchestra version of *Lux Aeterna*) while the latter stages of the work deconstruct this earlier material in intriguing ways. It was, as my companion succinctly put it, weirdly wonderful. Two simple ideas, an interwoven contrapuntal figure and a single repeated chord, provide the basis for Poul Ruders's large chamber ensemble entity *Corpus cum Figuris* (1985). But Ruders manages to build an edifice of remarkable variety from this seemingly limited material. The work is multihued, alluringly constructed, commandingly vigorous, and wonderful to hear.

The ensemble's normally modest-sized core of members was excellently augmented by some of Boston's best freelance musicians, with the whole being smartly conducted by Scott Wheeler. And many thanks go to Dinosaur Annex for showing that obsession need not be a worrisome thing.

## Double Double Your Pleasure

### DAVID CLEARY

Enchanted Circle Series. New England Conservatory of Music. September 25, Jordan Hall, Boston, MA.

Pianist Stephen Drury recently inherited the New England Conservatory's Enchanted Circle concert series from longtime directors James Hoffmann and Joseph Maneri. Long a champion of American experimentalists like John Cage and Morton Feldman as well as downtown New Yorkers like John Zorn (none of whom are otherwise much heard here in Boston these days), Drury made his first such outing a memorable affair, presenting a bumper crop of music from his favorite composers.

Christian Wolff, the concert's guest of honor, was represented by three works dating from varying points in his career. This reviewer's favorite was *Trio I* (1951), a highly economic *tour de force*. The piece paints with a very limited palette of frozen pitch classes; what makes this selection so wonderful is the stunning variety gotten by pulsing these notes from player to player (exhausting pretty much every possible permutation) and the overall sense of direction achieved by varying the rate at which these pitches cycle and reach simultaneous attack. In its own way, it's as splendidly pure as Webern's most succinct compositions. The solo clarinet piece *Dark as a Dungeon* (1977) is an improvisational sounding delight. While formally a bit loose, it nicely plays off sections that respectively stay in register or span the range of the instrument. It's also very challenging to play, featuring many passages bristling with extreme high notes. *Trio III* (1996) is an unusual and ambitious four-part entity. Its first movement, much lengthier than the others, is by and large an exercise in pointillistic playing (though not in the laid-back, mystic manner of Morton Feldman)—and best of all, similar passages recur later on in the piece. Movement four, as an example, begins with polytonal interwoven counterpoint involving piano, violin, and marimba, but eventually collapses into fragmented shards. This reviewer found balance and pacing a bit curious, but otherwise enjoyed it despite the faint strains of unintended brass choir music wafting in from an adjoining hall during soft passages.

Two stellar entries by John Zorn were also presented. *Carny* (1992) for piano solo is one of this composer's gleefully outrageous style-shift pieces: snatches of boogie-woogie, Impressionism, jazz, cocktail, ragtime, commercial music, High Romanticism, music box, pointillism, disjunct dissonance, and the *Tristan* chord surface in the maelstrom of sound. Tying it all together in rondo manner is an idea fashioned from pounded pitches played at the top of the keyboard. It too is technically demanding in both traditional ways (bravura passagework) and non-traditional ways (cross-hand glissandi, playing a pitch with one's nose in the center of the keyboard while both hands are occupied at the two extremes). The violin/piano duo *Le Momo* (1999) also utilizes a recurring reference point idea; here, piano ostinati (often serving as a carpet for solo violin material) provide the function of repose in an otherwise patchwork quilt of material—though here the sections do not shift styles, as in *Carny*. There's also a very general overall feel of winding down (culminating in a brief, loud coda that contains a concentrated recap of opening snippets) that gives the piece a sense of long-range direction. Part of the fun in this piece is found in its spoofing of flashy virtuoso playing; the violin writing in particular often degenerates into wild, out-of-control sliding that sounds not unlike braying hyenas.

*Having Never Written a Note for Percussion* (1971) by James Tenney was classically conceptual. Here, a percussionist sat in front of a huge tam-tam and inexorably played a roll in crescendo from the inaudible to the deafening and in diminuendo back down. What can one say? It was what it was. The fact that it angered a few (as Ives might put it) soft-eared sissies in the audience made it worth programming.

Performances varied, but the best were stunning. Of particular note were John Ferguson's remarkably paced and ferocious presentation (from memory, no less) of *Carny*, Michelle Shoemaker's excellently controlled playing (featuring a stellar high register) in *Dungeon*, William Winant's flawlessly executed gong roll in the Tenney, and the truly amazing version of *Le Momo* given by Drury and violinist Jennifer Choi.

## Extended Session

### DAVID CLEARY

Extension Works. September 22, First and Second Church, Boston, MA.

Presenting one's newest music alongside that by well-established lions of the literature can be a daunting proposition -- one must avoid being overshadowed or made to look callow when doing so. The first concert this season by the composers of Extension Works met this challenge head-on.

It is a pleasure to report that most of the youngsters held their end up proudly. *Our Heart and Home Is with Infinitude* (1998) by Robert Carl expertly sets verse by various Romantic period poets with nary a stumble whether employing English, French, German, or Italian texts. The work is thoroughly of our time in sound and technique yet pays clear homage to the music of bygone days, effectively utilizing pattern style piano accompaniments and ecstatically repeating the word “ergeben” in best Mahlerian *Das Lied von der Erde* finale fashion. Marti Epstein’s flute/piano duo *AND* (1995) combines a lovely Oriental delicacy with insistently obsessive ostinati. By expertly dovetailing less preoccupied passages into the work’s fabric, the composer creates an intriguing and unusual sense of long-range structure in the process. And the sonic interaction between the two instruments is both well considered and bewitching, the opening combination of stopped low piano and played/sung flute tone being only one of many memorable examples.

The violin and piano duo *Points of Service* (1999-2000) by John McDonald is a strong listen. While a dissonant, taut, self-contained set of miniatures, one never feels the shadow of Webern here—in fact, the outer movements suggest a concentrated and personal updating of Hindemith-oriented neoclassicism. Energy and contrast are numbered among its attributes. And McDonald’s two brief piano works *That Mulliner Influence* (2000) and *Entrada Upon La, Mi, Re* (1999) are sophisticated responses to examples of 16<sup>th</sup> century English keyboard music; the decision to program works from the two eras side by side proved fortuitous. Only Francine Trester’s *Second Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1999-2000) gave this critic pause. This far-flung, ambitious selection is not content to coast in the standard sonata groove, is not afraid to take risks in mood juxtaposition, and frequently bristles with hale vigor. But the work often unfolds in puzzling ways, and its harmonic language, careening from Brahms to Debussy to Charles Ives, seems haphazardly handled. Trester’s violin playing was superb, however, as were the flute turn by Marianne Gedigian and piano performances by Carl, Epstein, and McDonald. Soprano Judith Brown struggled with vocal projection and diction in the early going of *Our Heart*, but improved notably as the piece progressed.

The old-timers weighed in handsomely with the Ives song *Like a Sick Eagle*, Bohuslav Martinu’s *Flute Sonata No. 1*, and *Night Thoughts* for solo piano, Aaron Copland’s final completed work. This last selection hearkens back at times to the raucous clangor of his *Piano Variations*, but leavens it notably with warmer passages and triadic sonorities. It’s a fine and unusual composition.

Congratulations go out to the resident tonemeisters of Extension Works for keeping in stride with their elders when it comes to compositional quality.

## A View of Arcadia

### DAVID CLEARY

Arcadian Winds present Celebrating Boston! Masters Past and Present. September 23, Emmanuel Church Library, Boston, MA.

The Arcadian Winds, long one of the preeminent woodwind quintets in the Boston area, has decided to highlight Boston-based composers of the 20th century during its 2000-2001 season. The first such concert showed music-writing Beantowners indulging in bucolic, Stravinskian, or avant- approaches.

The pastoral selections on the concert were three in number. Scott Wheeler’s *Village Music* is a set of dances and fanfares inspired by visions of an imaginary rustic hamlet. From a stylistic standpoint, it’s perhaps most succinctly described as folk music filtered through a contemporary funhouse mirror -- full of surprising twists of form and pacing, yet elemental and warm-hearted to the core. It makes for fine listening, as does *Picnic Music* (2000), a work commissioned by the Arcadians from Daniel Pinkham. This selection deftly ploughs a most convincing middle ground between neoclassicism and more dissonant idioms; while personable and charming, it does not sacrifice sophistication and guts along the way. Or put another way, it’s rural, but no hayseed. On the surface, Amy Beach’s brief *Pastorale* may seem the piece most likely to play in Hicksville, but careful listening says otherwise. Beach here shrewdly works edgy chromatic surprises into the composition’s otherwise mild milieu.

Neoclassicism was represented in stellar fashion by Walter Piston’s *Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon* (whose light, breezy outer movements enfold a moodier, more chromatic center) and *Partita for Wind Quintet* by Irving Fine (a splendid, complex number, predominately lucid and energetic but culminating in a warm, lovely finale).

The other two works -- splendid hearings both -- proved to be raw, urban, worldly-wise, and obviously experimental in nature. *Amnesia Breaks* (1990) by Lee Hyla, while containing its calm moments, is generally raucous in sound, deriving its material from an oboe snippet that sounds like a playground taunt and sporting grouchy timbres like low stopped horn and shrill clarinet. It came off as a bracing splash of cold spring water after Beach’s *Pastorale*. Gunther Schuller’s *Woodwind Quintet* (1958) gleefully takes audacious formal risks, traffics in fragmented pointillism, and revels in active, noisy thickets of dense counterpoint. This is brainy stuff in the best sense of the word.

Whether in quintet or trio configuration, the Arcadians performed with flair and precision. Sensitive timbre balances, spotless fast-finger technique, tight ensemble, and accomplished solo playing were the order of the day. If the remaining two concerts in the series are as good as this one, the Arcadians will be both providing a worthy service to local composers of the past hundred years and treating present-day chamber music audiences to some special playing. Very much enjoyed.

## Golden Touch to Silver

### MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Opera presents Douglas Moore’s *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. September 29, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA.

“Silver is not gold” -- that seems to be the take-home message for mining magnate Horace Tabor in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, which opened at the San Francisco Opera on September 29 and closes October 14. This also may be a lesson the audience learns, for Douglas Moore’s 1956 work is a decidedly lesser ore.

Not that this production lacks in riches, beginning with the glorious Ruth Anne Swenson, whose portrayal of the title character is radiant both vocally and visually. Judith Forst, as Tabor's jilted first wife, is entrusted the most poignant aria of the evening, and carries it off with aplomb. James Morris's Horace is solid if lacking in sympathy -- but this is very likely due to John Latouche's libretto. It is very hard to care for this cad and his slow downfall through two very long acts. Go for broke, already....

This is probably the only opera with a plot that so heavily turns on monetary policy (the rejection of a silver standard in favor of a gold one is what ruins Horace's fortune). And possibly the only music drama to feature William Jennings Bryant and President Chester Allen Arthur (although clearly Moore has not cornered the presidential market now that John Adams's *Nixon in China* is around).

Moore's music errs on the side of tameness. There is little of the grit or majestic sweep that one might expect from frontier settings. Instead we get warmed over Italianate bel canto and folksy songs that would be appropriate for some elegant National Geographic special. Only occasionally does Moore rise to the extraordinary -- as he does in Augusta's aria above and the smoky-sexy music (better than anything Previn offered in last year's "A Streetcar Named Desire") of Baby Doe's daughter Silver Dollar, hauntingly and sensually realized by Tina Osinski.

Sets were vibrant, with the only bit of economizing in evidence the utilization of the same mighty backdrop of Colorado Rockies for both Leadville and Denver (gee, those mountains look familiar, don't they?). Costumes and props had tinges of silver in them, as if taken directly from old daguerreotypes and reflecting the precious metal of choice. The only touches of vibrant color were in the ballroom scene when Horace reaches the peak of his success. Rolling platforms wheeled characters (and a grand piano!) on and off stage as efficiently as mine cars in boom times.

In every way, the San Francisco Opera provided a gold standard for this singularly silver work.

## Dead Man Pondering

### MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Opera presents the premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (libretto by Terrence McNally). October 7, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA. Reviewed October 17.

I didn't love it as much as I hoped; I didn't hate it as much as I'd feared. The premiere by the San Francisco Opera of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, to a libretto by Terrence McNally, unveiled an uneven work that has its shares of strengths and weaknesses.

The overture is a lovely neoromantic, post-minimalist essay in sinuous ascending lines, lovingly realized by conductor Patrick Summers and the orchestra. The dark landscape of a trusting couple au naturel (all the charms of Sean San Jose and Dawn Walters are risquely in view) is accompanied by wonderfully tinny 80's style pop -- still Heggie's music but apparently emanating from a radio. From here however, the music lurches into rather generic, cinematic murder music, which, while reasonably effective, seems a bit easy, obvious, and corny. The situation improves a bit with an impressive clapping section à la Steve Reich or world beat, but this becomes marred by a folk music overlay that rings hollow. The onstage music and sound effects (radios, sirens, the ominous beeps of the lethal injection apparatus) are not integrated into the music of the orchestra, neither are they set apart so distinctly as to make some other effect. A few moments of humor in the libretto (particularly from the motor cop David Okerlund) are not particularly reflected in the music.

And so it goes -- moments of brilliance and moments of disappointment. Kristine Jepson is under-powered but poignant in the role of Sister Helen Prejean (alas Susan Graham, the intended lead, was called away from the part on October 17 due to a death in the family). John Packard proves a powerful package both vocally and dramatically as the convicted murderer Joseph de Rocher. And Frederica von Stade provides her signature star-power in the supporting characterization of Ms. Patrick de Rocher, Joseph's mother.

Much of the libretto revolves around Helen's attempts to get Joseph to admit his crimes. There is little suspense from the audience's perspective, having witnessed the scene at the opera's beginning. One began to think of the Monty Python Spanish Inquisition: "Confess! Confess!"

The ensemble writing is very good, whether it be in the quartet of parents of the murdered teenagers (Robert Orth, Nicolle Foland, Catherine Cook, and Gary Rideout), or the large choral cacophony of the prison block. In the latter, Heggie provides a consonant salad bed of orchestral music, over which spicy layers of shouting are added. Indeed, Heggie's instincts for beautiful music are perhaps better realized in the orchestra rather than in the voices (the long lines are with the former, with much recitative and arioso given to the singers). Like many composers, Heggie sometimes misses the overall forest of arcing form by becoming lost among the trees of the setting of individual words. And the composer's instincts for the gentle are sometimes overridden by the need for the violent. Often his most effective music is that which is understated and even ironic, rather than grandstandingly grandiloquent.

You certainly can't fault San Francisco Opera's commitment to the project. The production is first class all the way from promotion to execution. Whoops, sorry -- poor choice of words here for a story on death row. And the story is moving, although perhaps not as earth shattering, controversial, and provocative as its creators intended. The sets by Michael Yeargan and lighting by Jennifer Tipton are stunning -- if indebted to Robert Wilson's designs for the Philip Glass "Einstein on the Beach." The back-lit cell block is a take on the "Spaceship" section, while the blinding column of light behind a van could be right out of the "Bed" visuals. The cleverness of the scrims wins out over the grittiness of the situation. If you want death row intensity, rent "The Green Mile."

While the silence punctuated by medical machinery toward the work's conclusion makes its effect, one can't help but wonder if actual notes couldn't have worked magic as well. The final a cappella solo from Sister Prejean was thought provoking. When does the inevitable become predictable? When does the moving become the manipulative? There are no easy answers.

Kudos to San Francisco Opera's outgoing Lotfi Mansouri for continuing to commission new works. May he always keep in mind that world-class operas tend to come from world-class composers pursuing their own artistic visions.

## Live Opera Soaring

JEFF DUNN

San Francisco Opera presents the premiere of *Dead Man Walking* by Jake Heggie (libretto by Terrence McNally), featuring Susan Graham, John Packard, and Frederica von Stade, with Patrick Summers conducting the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. October 7, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA.

*Dead Man Walking* received tumultuous applause from an audience including several popular-culture notables: Robin Williams, Susan Sarandon, and Tim Robbins. Jake Heggie's new opera deserves adulation: its melodic basis reaches above the grim prison sets and gut-wrenching tragedies of beloveds' lives cut short. The simplicity and emotional immediacy of this masterwork tempts one to declare a triumphant repertory future for it along the lines of Floyd's *Susanna*; however, the experience is so draining one wonders if many opera goers will want to put themselves through this wringer more than once in a lifetime.

Unlike other excellent dramas turned into lackluster operas by pedestrian music -- André Previn's *Streetcar Named Desire* and Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk* come immediately to mind -- *Dead Man Walking* is worthy for Heggie's music alone. Even nonsense syllables would make for interesting listening, yet there is Terrence McNally's first-class libretto to boot. When the CD is eventually issued, one can return to the fabulous set pieces -- Sister Helen's drive to Angola, Joseph's mother's plea to the parole board, and the powerful ensemble scenes closing Act 1. Hopefully, such a CD will be compiled from San Francisco performances, for these were well nigh definitive, with superb acting and singing performances by the principals. Susan Graham seemed to this reviewer to be the vocal embodiment of a nun's character as Sister Helen. Frederica von Stade moved the house to tears as Joseph's mother. Even higher commendation, however, must be awarded John Packard for his performance as the death-row murderer Joseph de Rocher. Packard was physically and vocally perfect for the part, and outdid himself portraying the inner struggles of his conscience. This reviewer received the impression that Heggie must have customized the part perfectly to match Packard's strengths. After this, will anyone else be able to do it?

Some of the many musical beauties of the score deserve further mention, especially the influence of the "Bach(ock)s." The opera opens with a brief overture (a welcome formality these days!) which introduces an *idée fixe* similar in contour to Jerry Bock's famous song "Sunrise, Sunset" from *Fiddler on the Roof*. This theme, perhaps symbolizing the wasting of loved-ones lives, reaches its apogee in Joseph's mother's aria before the parole board. The contrapuntal choral passages which follow recall the greatness and gravitas of J.S. Bach's oratorios, here to a funeral-march rhythm reflecting society's lust for revenge. Fine also is the long duet between Sisters Helen and Rose (Teresa Hamm-Smith) in Act 2, Scene 2.

In general, Heggie's music strides confidently in the great American mainstream of song, recalling Barber in melodic contour, Sondheim in structure, and the contributions to the genre from other tonalists such as Rorem and Del Tredici. Perhaps Heggie's focusing in this realm has led to neglect of the art of orchestration: while competent, Heggie has little exciting to offer in this regard. Furthermore, Heggie's rejection of anything avant- will not set him in good stead with European critics should *Dead Man* walk abroad. Birtwistle and Ligeti have advanced opera considerably in the last decade, whereas Heggie offers nothing new.

Nevertheless, for the immediacy of its message, the intensity of its drama, and the song-based glory of its music, *Dead Man Walking* is live opera soaring, the best American opera since John Adams's *Nixon in China*.

## Dead is Alive

JANOS GEREBEN

San Francisco Opera presents the premiere of *Dead Man Walking* by Jake Heggie (libretto by Terrence McNally), featuring Susan Graham, John Packard, and Frederica von Stade, with Patrick Summers conducting the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. October 7, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA.

October 7's world premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* in San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House was more than an enormous hit, as the celebrity-studded, security-guarded audience gave it a huge ovation.

The event also marked the introduction of a truly important new composer on the scene of contemporary American opera. At 39 (and looking half of that, somewhat incongruously), with his first opera -- in fact, a pianist's first large-scale orchestrated work, a songwriter's first excursion into other genre -- Heggie seems to have arrived fully formed as a natural, wonderfully talented, audience-pleasing and yet uncompromisingly serious opera composer.

Everything is done right with this final big project created and managed by the company's retiring general manager, Lotfi Mansouri. Terrence McNally wrote a brilliantly sparse libretto from Helen Prejean's book; Joe Mantello's production, with Michael Yeagan's grand sets, seems seamless and doesn't call attention to itself; Patrick Summers conducted one of the finest performances of his long and illustrious career here -- and none of that would matter a fig if the work itself failed or even faltered. It doesn't. It's all of one piece, a song sustained over a whole evening.

Besides the work itself, there was one other grand, unforgettable thing about tonight: Susan Graham, as Sister Helen, pouring forth a strong, luscious voice, with impeccable diction and consistent impact, almost continuously for two and a half hours, in a performance that would have been stunning even if the music didn't succeed. Given the combination of Graham's performance and wonderful music, it was truly a "grand night for singing" -- an interesting concept in contemporary opera.

Heggie's music is difficult to describe beyond clichés of "melodic, neo-romantic." etc., but - at the risk of repetition - it is true to its origin, "song-like," with the vocal line constantly up front and soaring, against a complex and yet transparent orchestral background. The inevitable "like" you can't help mentioning in case of a new composer would bring up Richard Strauss and Debussy in texture, Britten and Sondheim in melodic structure (especially the latter's "Passion"), and just a hint of latter-day Minimalists, such as Adams.

The work is structured cinematically, with the actual double murder opening the scene, and -- Hitchcock-like -- revealing the facts the opera's protagonists are trying to find. In McNally's writing, there is sophisticated complexity in presenting the many aspects of what a lesser work would show as a single "truth." The execution concluding the work makes for bold and effective theater, rather than advocacy or outright propaganda. All that security, by the way, was for naught: there were but a few well-behaved demonstrators outside the Opera House, passing out leaflets either for or against capital punishment.

Besides Graham's marvelous performance (in addition to all the vocal splendor, she was also funny, appealing, affecting, not a false move all night long), the huge cast put on one of the company's most consistently excellent performances in a long time. John Packard was a vocally and physically (no singer has ever done so many pushups!) impressive Joseph de Rocher (the "dead man"); Frederica von Stade was virtually unrecognizable as his frumpy mother -- until she opened her mouth, that is; Theresa Hamm-Smith made an auspicious San Francisco debut as Sister Rose; Nicolle Foland and Gary Rideout excelled as the murdered youths' parents. Ian Robertson's chorus just blew the house away in climactic scenes -- although the silent minutes of the execution and Graham's unaccompanied song that followed spoke louder still.

Good news: the performance was filmed, and it will be broadcast. Meanwhile, it looks like a virtual certainty that *Dead Man Walking* will soon make the rounds in the U.S. and Europe.

## Dead Man Pedestrian

### DAVE MECKLER

San Francisco Opera presents the premiere of *Dead Man Walking* by Jake Heggie (libretto by Terrence McNally), featuring Susan Graham, John Packard, and Frederica von Stade, with Patrick Summers conducting the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. October 7, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA.

*Dead Man Walking* is a disappointment. The piece has undeniably strong dramatic mojo -- the two women sitting next to me were weeping throughout most of Act II -- but there's nothing new and very little distinctive about the music. There is just not the sort of vividness that one gets with harmony and melodic line in the operas of, for example, Benjamin Britten, one of the composer's models.

As theater, there were some nice tableaux, but Act I was rather slow moving. One scene featured Sister Helen driving to the prison. The stage was absolutely bare except for the two car seats of the nun's car. This set was minimal without having the rigor and visual vigor of being minimalist. One could compare the moment to Pat Nixon's solo aria in *Nixon in China*, which was dazzling -- a single figure standing completely alone in the center of a huge stage against a vivid red backdrop. The similar scene in *Dead Man Walking* was just shabby and drab.

The "Drive to the Prison" scene is also musically disappointing. The music didn't really go anywhere or develop to give us a sense of journey or travel. It certainly was not Siegfried's journey! More to the point, the scene could be compared to one in *Ravenshead*. In that piece, Steve Mackey used a large-scale plan of different types of scales evolving over the full-length of the opera. One did not necessarily hear the process of the *Ravenshead* scales changing, but the differences in scales were very apparent and definitely gave a sense of travel within different harmonic regions (this of course ran parallel to the *Ravenshead* story line).

The various motifs used in *Dead Man Walking* were recognizable enough, but they were not particularly memorable. The orchestration was rather thin and without reason. A large orchestra was present in the pit, but there seemed to be no symbolic reason to refrain from using it. There were some pretty flute moments.

We rejoice that the opera is a public success, once again showing that new opera often is good for the box office, although we wish the production contained some new elements to guide the public along. Perhaps there is an emerging San Francisco Opera formula -- a new opera must use conservative tonal language and have a rape scene. Three of their last four new operas involved one, and the opera that didn't substituted an assassination (*Harvey Milk*). One supposes that the strategy is to use easily-triggered intense emotions to compensate for bland musical language.

## Concert 1: Glass Symphony No. 5

### WALT ERICKSON

North American premiere of Philip Glass's *Symphony No. 5* performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, the Desoff Choir, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, all under the direction of Dennis Russell Davies. October 7, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY.

In his review of Philip Glass's *Symphony No. 5*, Paul Griffiths of The New York Times chided the work, stating that "given that the symphony in 12 movements, summarized the entirety of creation and human life, the homogeneity that was also found in the musical invention was perplexing" [October 9, 2000].

For those who are used to reading about Glass's music, this notion is well understood; Philip Glass still sounds very much like Philip Glass whether it be music for a film, dance or orchestral work. Enthusiasts of his music know that romantic reaching and yearning is a component that is well embedded into his constantly sweet minimal language, not something that isn't there. Some just don't get it.

This huge ensemble gave Glass the opportunity to create many changes of texture, occurring most obviously in the movements that contained the vocal soloists and the huge choir. Whether in unison or in a sort of call and response, the highlights of the piece most often occurred herein. Specifically, one section contained a heartwarming portion sung by the three male soloists as a group and then each on their own, while the orchestra and chorus provided a sensual "padded backdrop."

Movement 7, "Suffering," contained an ensemble tutti that exploded in loudness while Movement 10, "Judgement and Apocalypse," was dark, ragged (not quite what we expect from Glass's soothing compositional personality) and deranged. If at this point you're not quite convinced that this is no different from any other Glass piece, I mention what I think was probably the most peculiar moment of the entire 100-minute piece (occurring towards the end of movement 11): two bizarre piccolo lines chirped over the rest of the orchestra with odd rhythms and melodic contours--unlike anything that I have heard from this composer before.

In his book *Inside the Music, Conversations with Contemporary Musicians about Spirituality, Creativity and Consciousness* (Shambhala Productions, Inc.), Dimitri Ehrlich explains that, "...Glass sees a clearer relationship between the tenets of Buddhism and his motivation as a musician. Buddhist doctrine stresses the value of decreasing others' suffering." (p. 21)

Thus it is not a coincidence that the text of the finale of his millennium-commissioned symphony (Movement 12, "Dedication of Merit"), expounds generously upon these themes.

"...For as long as space endures and for as long as living beings remain, until then may I too abide to dispel the misery of the world." The text was translated into a mighty music that drove until the text's conclusion, only to have the music turn into itself thereafter.

Glass, who collaborated with Rev. James Parks Morton and professor of religion Kusumita Pricilla Pedersen, shows with this piece that he is still extremely adept at flavoring his musical language to be in sync with the specific nature of the project that he and his collaborators establish. These extra-musical factors in place prior to the composing of the music provide him with a structure and authority that restricts his freedom so that he can thrive.

When you walk around a modern art museum and come upon "their" Warhol, do you criticize it because you know right away that there's no mistaking who the creator of the piece is and you've seen so many others sort of like it? We've seen so many Warhols (and heard so much Glass) and yet we don't complain. We simply enjoy.

## Invoking the Timeless

### MICHAEL MCDONAGH

North American premiere of Philip Glass's *Symphony No. 5* ("Choral"): *Requiem, Bardo, Nirmanakaya* (1998-1999) performed by Brooklyn Philharmonic, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, and Dessoff Choir, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, with Kimberly E. Jones (soprano), Milagro Vargas (mezzo soprano), John McVeigh (tenor), Andre Solomon-Glover (baritone), and Stephan MacLeod (bass-baritone). October 7, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY.

The atmosphere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Howard Gilman Opera House was intensely familial. This was the opening program of this year's Next Wave Festival and the US premiere of Philip Glass's *Symphony No. 5* (1998-1999). Commissioned by the Salzburg Festival and premiered there last summer it received an unprecedented 25-minute standing ovation, and this for a brand new work. And so when Dennis Russell Davies mounted the podium and gave the downbeat, the sense of occasion was enormous.

And, after the short orchestral introduction with its pregnant tritone, things got very mysterious in movement 1: "Before The Creation" -- there are 12 movements -- when the girls of the Brooklyn Youth Chorus and the women of the Dessoff Choirs entered chiming "There was neither non-existence nor existence then..." from the Sanskrit Rig-Veda -- though sung in English like all the other texts here -- it was obvious we weren't in for a normal piece. Glass and his collaborators, the Very Reverend James Parks Morton of the Interfaith Center of New York (and formerly of St. John The Divine) and Kusumita P. Pedersen of St. Francis College, have drawn the symphony's libretto from 5000 years of this planet's sacred "wisdom" traditions which include the Bible, the Koran, the Mayan Popul Vuh, a Japanese Noh play excerpt, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Zuni myths, the Bhagavad Gita, and many other sources. Few composers would attempt something as ambitious as this, but Glass' heartfelt connection to all of these disparate texts as well as his great technical skill made this potentially unwieldy piece work. And there wasn't a dull patch anywhere in his 100-minute symphony.

One of the reasons for this is Glass's remarkable sense of pacing which he's refined from his long experience in the theatre, and that means film too. The first two movements have a general lightness and speed (and firm yet flexible tempos), and few composers -- Mozart comes to mind -- could make these sections so fluid and involving. This doesn't mean that Glass doesn't plumb darker depths here because he does that with the tritone which colors the work at important points and functions as an intervallic gesture symbolizing the mortality of human desire. We want to be nobler than we are, and kinder too, but this augmented fourth -- the medieval Church forbade its use and called it "diabolus in musica" ("the devil in music") says we don't always succeed -- there's always this shadow. Still Glass doesn't use this as an unyieldingly dogmatic unifying device the way a 12-note composer might. The orchestral and vocal textures are also amazingly varied, and the composer writes knockout parts for each of the five vocal soloists, and someone at BAM had the inspired idea of having these singers stand on black and white lighted cubes of graduated sizes. We do, after all, go to the theatre to see as well as hear something. Milagro Vargas was clearly the standout here -- she's imposingly tall and her body language conveyed both concentration and serenity -- and she has two seductive solos in movement 5, "Love and Joy" -- the first a Rumi poem, the second a Bengali one, which are separated by an excited and transparently scored girls' and women's' chorus setting of one of "The Song of Songs."

But few moments in movement 5 can equal or surpass the phenomenal chorus in Job 3, "Let the day perish wherein I was born," which forms the center of movement 7, "Suffering." Glass's setting uncannily reveals the meaning of the words, moving as it does from men's' chorus (in a prayerful kind of anger), to the women's' chorus alone (the orchestra almost entirely gone), to a feeling of massed despair in the mixed chorus at the end (winding scale with tritone, snare drum, brass and winds). Glass is especially touching and inspired in his four settings of the Buddhist saint Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* which figure in several sections, including all of the last one, "Dedication of Merit" -- "May I be a protector for those without one" -- which verbally, musically and emotionally sums up the theme of this majestic and very moving millennial work: compassion. And though the metric and textural changes are very complex here they never get in the way of the text's flow but support it. But the composer, ever the canny dramatist, underlined the fragile nature of this prayer by bringing in the tritone at the movement's beginning and end. So that only a stunned silence remains. After a pause the audience responded with a standing ovation but not a 25-minute one -- this is America, folks -- and the composer and his librettists, and Diane Berkun, artistic director of the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, as well as Davies, took three curtain calls. This symphony is a fiercely demanding work but Davies led a spectacular performance -- thrilling, dramatic and entirely musical.

And the choruses met its challenges resoundingly.. Though this is an expensive piece to mount it's safe to say that we'll be hearing some of these choruses soon, and, who knows, maybe they'll become repertory pieces, too. With all the trouble in the Middle East -- the premiere occurred on the eve of Yom Kippur -- we apparently still need to be reminded that human beings can do better, and Glass's *Symphony No. 5* is certainly testimony to that.

## Frederick Rzewski: Fellow Traveller

### MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Frederic Rzewski, in works by Cardew, Wolff, Pousseur, and Rzewski. October 11, The Jazz Gallery, New York, NY.

Contemporary music is no laughing matter, and its practitioners seldom have truly popular appeal. Who in his right mind would abandon the high road of modernism just to be popular? Composer Frederic Rzewski, however, has had several new-music hits with pieces like *Attica* and *Coming Together* (both 1972) and *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* (1975).

Still, his solo piano program, which Jed Distler and Celia Cooke's Composers Collaborative produced under the title *Solo Flights 2000* (Rzewski's was called *What the Artistic Life Leads To*), was pretty esoteric, if not arcane. Rzewski re-ordered it completely and began with Cornelius Cardew's 1981 *We Sing for the Future*, a variation-set in various harmonic and historic styles, with moods ranging from the comic to the celebratory, even the tragic. Rzewski's playing showed an impressively wide range of touch and tempo (he remembered Cardew as being uncompromising in the best way, and a strong influence on Michael Nyman, Gavin Bryars and others less known but equally talented). Christian Wolff's 1981 *Preludes* sounded bare and unassuming, and the unfinished nature of this form seemed to be literally reflected in the work itself. The New York premiere of the Belgian Henri Pousseur's 6 year-old *Les Litanies d'Icare* followed. It started out dry but got progressively more eventful, and broader, with strongly opposed harmonies, and a feeling almost prayerful, litanies being of course religious invocations, and in this case for a man who dared to affront the gods by flying towards the sun. Pousseur's ending could therefore be interpreted either as Icarus's fall or his apotheosis. At any rate this was a surprisingly inspired piece. Rzewski's own *The Road: Mile 41* (2000), which he conceives as a 5 1/2 hour piece encompassing 63 miles, had little intrinsic interest by itself, but seemed to sketch an inconclusive mood, and if that was its intent it succeeded admirably. His 1992 *De Profundis* is a sort of "art house hit" in the new music world, and a justifiable one too, and even a post-modern audience can respond to a piece like this because people will never outgrow their need for theater. Rzewski cannily re-arranged Oscar Wilde's famous and truly deep text so that it had a new dramatic trajectory, and his performance of it was both passionate and involving. It's always a crapshoot mixing spoken text with music and here the words won out over the music, though you probably wouldn't have that problem if the words were sung. Despite Rzewski's post-concert protestations to the contrary he seems a natural theatre composer, and collaborating with others would probably take this gifted artist out of his modernist "isolation." The Baldwin piano he played sounded fine, though clangorous in loud spots.

## Concert 2: Ligeti Quartet No. 1

### WALT ERICKSON

György Ligeti's *Quartet No. 1* (1953-54) performed by The Pacifica String Quartet (Simin Ganatra and Sibbi Bernhardtsson, violins; Kathryn Lockwood, viola; and Brandon Vamos, cello). October 13, Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

A discussion prior to the Pacifica String Quartet's performance of György Ligeti's *Quartet No. 1* gave us generous background on the piece: Its first performance occurred in 1956 after Ligeti moved from behind the iron curtain from Hungary to Vienna. A joke amongst those in the know says that the piece is really "Bartók's *Quartet No. 7*" because of the elder composer's heavy influence on Ligeti's compositional personality at the time. Further, we were informed of and played the defining motive of the piece: a 4-note pattern of 2 ascending seconds. Additional excerpts were played as well.

The piece, sandwiched by music of Schumann and Mendelssohn, contained several glissandos of harmonics strewn across all of the players. Brandon Vamos, the group's cellist excelled in this regard; his instrument achieved a sound approaching a theremin. At various points during the piece, the music sounded like music for a film about aliens. A funny waltz section added humor -- the jovial nature sounded like backup music for a cartoon.

This was one of the group's favorite pieces; we could tell that they clearly enjoyed performing it. They were doing something "different" from not only the rest of the program (amazing how this piece seemed to be handled by the performers as risqué in this setting), but something different from the perspective of the devilishly conservative Carnegie Hall crowd.

## Street Scenes

### MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Goat Hall Productions presents *Weill at Heart*. Oct 13, Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through October 29. Reviewed October 15.

The songs of Kurt Weill are such a part of our culture that we tend to take him for granted. How could anyone so easily accomplished be that good? Weill's a smoothie alright but his tunes, whether comic, lyric, seductive or tragic get under our collective skin. And his music certainly offers a lot more charm and pleasure than that of Copland whose centenary is also being celebrated, along with his, this year.

San Francisco's Goat Hall Productions had the smart idea of presenting Weill's work in a cabaret setting, and mixing works from his European and American periods. This brought the Weimar Republic and racy Berlin to mind, and fusing pieces from both sides of the Atlantic showed the musical and expressive unity of the composer's work, or the lived knowledge, you might say, which he put into his songs.

The 13-member cast put these 28 songs across in ensemble, duet, and other combinations, and director Harriet March Page had the happy idea of casting tenor Douglas Mandell as Weill to bring his presence closer -- he read his words and sang too. And speaking of close, soprano Heather Lukens Gavin and tenor Jose Alberto Fernandez flirted up a storm in the seldom heard "It Never Was You" from Maxwell Anderson's 1938 *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Tenor and music director Mark Alburger assumed the role of a confidence man when he sang "Mack the Knife" ("Moritat" from Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera)* which remains Weill's best known song due to the numerous covers it's received. "Youkali" from *Marie Galante* (1934) -- Weill spent a year in Paris before emigrating to the US -- was memorably performed here by Diana Landau, Miriam Lewis, and Harriet March Page (the lyrics are by Jacques Deval and Roger Fernay). "Ain't It Awful, The Heat" from Weill's megahit *Street Scene* (1946, book Elmer Rice, lyrics Langston Hughes) was sung with thick New York accents by singers who looked like shopgirls on a cigarette break. All the other performers were just as enthusiastic and energetic, and the band included Alburger on oboe, and Sharon Walters full of verve and panache on accordion. Doug Hanvey was the subtle and rhythmically alert pianist. Harriet March Page and Miriam Lewis's mariner outfits for the guys and brocade-topped skirts and dresses for the girls were sexy and evocative of the period, though the tinsel wigs the castmembers occasionally wore looked like they wandered in from the costume shop of Blake Edwards' 1982 film *Victor/Victoria*. The music of Weill still exerts its magic, and that's because it speaks directly and honestly, and it's superbly made.

## Concert 3: Strange Attractors

### WALT ERICKSON

*Strange Attractors*. Stephen Petronio Dance Company dances to music by Placebo, Michael Nyman, and James Lavelle. October 17, Joyce Theater, New York, NY. Through October 22.

*Strange Attractors*, which marks the 15th anniversary of the Steven Petronio Dance Company, is an evening-length dance in two parts where new music, sculpture and fashion join as one. Petronio's beautiful dancers engaged in aggressive, physically-charged movements.

According to chaos theory, a strange attractor is a moving and magnetic focal point in a seemingly chaotic field. This two-part piece included a Prelude which used music by Placebo entitled "Without You I'm Nothing" (vocals by David Bowie).

Part I was danced to a half-hour commissioned score by Michael Nyman. His music, using his usual instrumentation of strings, flutes, saxes, piano and electric bass is typical Nyman; he has a way of stressing certain unusual parts of the phrase -- and this facet of his musical language generates his individual sound. Pulsing with romantic strings, this lyric score is heavily reminiscent of his score for the film *Gattaca*. The men, wearing gray shiny satin pajamas, reinforced this comparison, for these costumes suggested the cold and stark depiction of the future that the film portrays.

The dancers expertly created patterns that reached and yearned along with the lushness of the music. In a few moments, Petronio interestingly kept the dancers moving after segments of the music ended or before they began. There was certainly a richly romantic underpinning here that revealed a softer, more gentle side to Petronio's choreography. Clearly, Petronio achieved his goal of making the dance "become romantic without becoming sappy." (A metaphor for Nyman's music?)

With Part II, the mood shifted abruptly as the dancers jumped onto stage in unison. Much more combative than the first part, the dance featured more partnering and physical interaction. This definitely matches the trip-hop and pop-ambient score by James Lavelle, one of Britain's foremost underground music makers. This all occurs beneath a reflective environmental stage set composed of two large discs of polished aluminum. (They looked like the mirrors that one sees up high in the corners of convenience stores that are an intended anti-theft device.) Designed by the sculptor Anish Kapoor, the set provided an interesting, albeit blurry, second way for the audience to watch the dancers, if they so chose.

## Bowling for Musical Riches

### MARK ALBURGER

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Matthew Malsky's *Ancient Devices*, Tom Lopez's *Aspect Ratio#*, Eric Chasalow's *The Furies*, and four selections from Carl Stone's *Guelaguetza*. October 26. Kobacker Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH. Through October 28.

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Dennis DeSantis's *Breaking Training*, Paul Nauert's *Spirit*, G. Bradley Bodine's *Rhapsodia*, Jean Milew's *Awakening*, Vladimir Tosic's *Dual*, Karl Korte's *Distant Pentachords*, and the Midwest premiere of Terry Riley's *Tread on the Trail*. October 27. Bryan Recital Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH. Through October 28.

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Amy Kucera's *David*, Mikel Kuehn's *Double Labyrinth*, Terry Riley's *Ritmos and Melos*, Robert Gibson's *Mirage*, Toru Takemitsu's *A Bird Came Down The Walk*, and Annette LeSieg's *Reflections*. Jeffrey Hass's *Keyed Up*, Alice Gomez's *Bonampak*, Robert J. Frank's *Part of the Wind*, Joseph Koykkar's *Impulse*, Burton Beerman's *Playthings*, and excerpts from Terry Riley's *Chanting the Light of Foresight*. October 27, Kobacker Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Anthony Iannaccone's *West End Express*, Braxton Blake's *Dorothy Parker Songs*, and Jennifer Higdon's *Blue Cathedral*, performed by the Bowling Green Philharmonia, conducted by Emily Freeman Brown. Shafer Mahoney's *Fast Forward* (with flutist Kathryn Thomas Umble), Warren Gooch's *The Stones Speak of Eternity*, and Evan Chambers's *Polka Nation*, performed by the Bowling Green Wind Ensemble, conducted by Bruce Moss. October 28. Kobacker Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. David Crumb's *Soundings*, Joe L. Alexander's *Two Bryant Songs*, William Ryden's *Three Rags for Violin and Viola*, the American premiere of Terry Riley's *Olson III*, Yung Wa Son's *Prayers in the Wind*, and Jason Eckardt's *Tangled Loops*. October 28. 18th-Century Gallery, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH.

Much of Bowling Green, Ohio, looks like just about any small town in the Midwest, but it is home to a fine state university and one of the greatest new-music festivals in the country. The *21st Annual New Music and Art Festival* welcomed Featured Composer Terry Riley and Special Guests Carl Stone, Ingrid Gordon, Alexa Still, Freda Herseht, and Corinne Imberski and Anh Nguyen of the Detroit Dance Collective, in a stimulating three-day event which began on October 26.

Computer-music guru Stone performed four selections from his *Guelaguetza* to kick off the first evening's concert at Kobacker Hall. This large-scale enigmatic work was commissioned for 20th Century Forum's 1996 Chapel of the Chimes concert in Oakland, CA. After a haunting, cyclical, new age / minimalist opening, Stone broke into more raucous terrains, gyrating madly to the distorted, funky samples.

Matthew Malsky's *Ancient Devices* (1993/1999), performed by clarinetist Kevin Schempf in consort with live computer processing began as an updated *Rhapsody in Blue*, before finding its way into Reichian hocketing. There were plenty of angular and dissonant gestures in the mix as well as an extended sequence of simple and effective castanet samples.

Tom Lopez found another, more Cageian, type of interaction in *Aspect Ratio#* (2000), where a video tracking system enabled dancers Celesta Haraszti, Imberski, and Nguyen to control and shape the pre-programmed computer music. As the performers moved into the offstage camera's narrow field of vision, which ran diagonally downstage to upstage, music was triggered by their movements. One initially had a sense of clear delineations between triggered music and silence, leading to a realization that the individual dancers (via positioning, motion, and costuming) controlled different kinds of sounds. Ultimately a thorough blending of musics and gestures left one to simply marvel at the synthesis.

*The Furies*, Eric Chasalow's setting of four poems by Anne Sexton, was wondrously realized by the glorious soprano Deborah Norin-Kuehn, to the accompaniment of music generated initially at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center using modified classical analogue studio techniques. Norin-Kuehn's pure tone beautifully interacted with music that was much more than merely furious, in settings that often did not take the obvious course, such as in "The Fury of Guitars and Sopranos."

Flutist Still and marimbist Gordon were the dazzling featured duo in three works on October 27 in Bryan Recital Hall: Dennis DeSantis's *Breaking Training* (2000), Paul Nauert's *Spirit* (1998), and G. Bradley Bodine's *Rhapsodia* (1999). The former was an energetic exercise in virtuosity, and the middle a beautiful interweaving of solo and duo lines. The latter offered an eventful, episodic, very clearly-structured work that evoked Greek and Celtic music, Morse Code, and slight hints of jazz.

Jean Milew's *Awakening* upped the sound ante as a trio for marimbist Roger B. Schupp and percussionists Michael Sander and Kevin Clyde. This is a three part work of sleeping, dreaming, and awakening with plenty of unsettling and evocative "night music." The composer showed great restraint in only calling for one gong stroke, and softly at that, in the concluding section.

The *Dual* of Vladimir Tomic was a cooperation, rather than duel, for pianists Marina Chamasy and Edgardo Salinas. If Milew was spare, Tomic was sparer in a minimalist reduction of materials that consisted of only two complementary lines and a melodic series of eight tones that was quite pleasing. *Distant Pentachords*, by Karl Korte, found flutist Judith Bently and a page-turner/wind-chimest responding to intriguing digital audio resources.

A great revelation was Terry Riley's *Tread on the Trail* (1965), in what was undoubtedly its first performance in the Midwest. This Sonny Rollins inspired work brings the animated hocketing of *In C* into a jazz context with a lead sheet of five melodies, each based on the rhythmic structure 3-2-5-3-4-4-5-3-5-2-3-2. Each appealing, catchy, kicky melody is first stated in unison and then restated hypnotically and energetically in a free counterpoint which varies from performance to performance. An exciting student ensemble placed pairs of basses and mallet percussion (Nathan Bersée, Jason Hogue, Cale Parks, and Clyde) on either side of an almost dixieland band lineup of clarinetist Sarah Labovitz, alto saxophonist Chung-Yu Lee, trumpeter Mark Nixon, and trombonist Kris Morron. Each wind player took a turn at standing up -- not for a solo, but -- to signal the gradual return to unison after extended contrapuntal adventures.

Amy Kucera's *David* (1999) had something to say to all of this with the glowing voices of the University Women's Chorus, directed by Mark Munson, with pianists Stacy Barelos and Bogdan Minut, beginning a concert later that day in Kobacker Hall. Particularly in the first movement, representing David's anointing as king, Kucera found her own post-minimal beauty in a mix further inspired by the polychoral motets of the renaissance, Gregorian chant, baroque cantatas, and Balinese kecak. The third movement, on the Absalom story, was more episodic and narrative in nature, and certainly not without its poignancy.

*Double Labyrinth* (1999) found Mikel Kuehn inspired by a different island muse, that of Kesatuan, the Indonesian word for "unity." Still and Gordon were inspired as well in realizing this difficult and focused music.

Violinist Beluska, pianist Laura Melton, and percussionist Schupp were similarly challenged in Riley's *Ritmos and Melos* (1993), an arresting two-movement work that was premiered several years ago in the San Francisco Bay area by David Abel, Julie Steinberg, and William Winant. The sensuous, exotic (at times almost Lou Harrisonesque albeit percussively funkier) lines were well realized in this Ohian incarnation, and the 7/8 "Ritmos-rhapsody" section transported listeners to another world.

*Mirage*, by Robert Gibson, was a more solemn take on the otherworldly, lovingly brought forth by a bevy of ten flutists (Quiao Zhang, Jessica Brown, Christy Jensik, Liz Farney, Jennifer Aros, Jessica Levy, alto flutists Donna Davies and Michelle George, and bass flutist Kalee Carlton), conducted by Leah Martindale. Relatedly, one of Toru Takemitsu's last works, *A Bird Came Down the Walk* (1995), took flight in the still motions of violist Nancy Buck and pianist Melton.

Annette LeSiege then roused everyone with her manic, militarist *Reflections* (1999), heroically enlivened by the BGSU Percussion ensemble in a work sweetened by African drumming and appealing antiphony.

Yet a third concert for the day began smokily and dangerously in Jeffrey Hass's *Keyed Up* (1995), a resoundingly stimulating tour-de-force for the keyboardists of Duo Solose, graced by a demonstrative electronic tape. This was followed by Alice Gomez's wonderful *Bonampak* (1999), where tubist Velvet Brown accompanied by Melton, provided energetic virtuosity to a music intriguingly informed by such disparate sources as Mayan culture, post-minimalism, and Vaughan Williams.

*Part of the Wind*, by Robert J. Frank, found Native American inspiration in the poem *Tumbleweed* by Ramona Carden, nicely realized by soprano Myra Merritt, with flutist Bently and percussionist Clyde. Next, the impulsive *Impulse* of Joseph Koykka found pianist Robert Satterlee engaged in through-composed exciting minimalist adventures that slowly traversed in tonal focus from E-flat to A-flat via B-flat. Penultimately, Burton Beerman appeared as a lotus-position swami-Schoenberg clarinetist composer in *Playthings*, a mystical dance with Haraszti, Imberski, and Nguyen, in a choreography by Zizi Mészáros and Nguyen.

The final event of an eventful day was Absolute Zero Saxophone Quartet's performance of two excerpts from Riley's varied *Chanting the Light of Foresight*: the solemn beautiful chorale "Ferdia's Death Chant" and dizzily contrapuntal "Chanting the Light of Foresight."

The final day of the festival brought a change of venue in the 18th-Century Gallery of the Museum of Art in Toledo. The three works which made up the first half of the program were reviewed by Brian Bice, in an article which may be found below.

The realization of Riley's *Olsen III* (1967) seemed particularly suited to the genteel surroundings of the gallery. In marked contrast to the spicy uptempo first performance in Stockholm, this American premiere was sober, dignified, and pure, with an early music quality to the voices. Arrayed in front of the piano from audience left to right were a balanced ensemble of clarinet, soprano, alto recorder, bass, tenor, clarinet, violin, contrabass, melodica, tenor, alto, and clarinet. In the spirit of *In C*, the music consists of progressively realized fragments in multiple repetitions, each beginning at the discretion of each individual player. Unlike its famous predecessor however, this music is basically vocal, complete with an unfolding appropriately minimalist text; has no added high-note piano pulse (although it certainly pulsates); and is even more stripped down rhythmically: all the notes are of one rhythmic value. Another revelation.

Yung Wa Son's *Prayers in the Wind* proved another still eastern music somewhat along the lines of the Takemitsu. There were moments of glowingly high harmonics from flutists Kathryn Thomas Umble and Rebecca Meier. Penny Thompson Kruse and Steven Kruse carried on in fine style for a rollicking finale that was William Ryden's *Three Rags for Violin and Viola* (1988)

The final concert in Kobacker Hall was a double bill of the Bowling Green Philharmonia, conducted by Emily Freeman Brown, and Wind Ensemble, directed by Bruce Moss. The former chugged out with Anthony Iannaccone's *West End Express* (1997), a winning work of working-on-the-railroad motives that would make a fine curtain raiser anywhere. The tenor was varied in the four selections that constitute Braxton Blake's *Dorothy Parker Songs*, where the orchestra was joined by the vibrant soprano Herseth. Throughout, Blake made fascinating musical choices, including favoring energy over eroticism in the final "Little Old Lady in Lavender Silk." Jennifer Higdon's *Blue Cathedral* had both erotic and spiritual overtones in an exotic, Crumb-informed music of intelligence and artistry. The final ethereal murmurs from tens of delicate Chinese "musical balls" scattered throughout the orchestra, harkened back to the opening peals of bells and carried one forward to a heavenly sphere.

The Wind Ensemble and amplified flutist Umble then checked in with *Fast Forward* (1998), a sparkling work by Shafer Mahoney that suggested new and exciting directions. Yes, an amplified acoustic soloist sounds great with a large group, enabling accompaniments that need not dummy down orchestrationally whenever the soloist enters. This was a devil take the hindmost impetuous plunge along the lines of Stravinsky's *Piano Concerto* and some of Bang on a Can's chamber works, where everyone gets a chance to shine.

*The Stones Speak of Eternity* was Warren Gooch's well-crafted take on moving from the universal to the personal (somewhat along the lines of "For God, for America, and for Yale!"), beginning in the "Monoliths" of Ice Ages and ending with a "Monument" to a fallen student. For Gooch, pre-history conjures up a surreal mix of medieval organum, cluster chords, animated percussion, and even a little bit of Berg. His "Petroglyphs" left pointed questions about source material (in this case Native American) and usage, while his "Cornerstone" took the hymn "Foundation" out for a gentle Ivesian spin. The concluding movement brought another hymn into a stew of references to the earlier movements. The personal becomes universal yet again....

And speaking of Ives, the great early 20th-century composer couldn't have done it any better in the early 21st-century (or are we there yet) in a loving yet wicked homage *Polka Nation* by Evan Chambers. This music turned on a dime -- threatening, witty, laugh-out loud fun, ear-splitting, ugly, dangerous. Chambers delivers a one-two punch in two-four time.

And so does the Bowling Green *New Music and Art Festival* in any time, particularly this time, their magic 21st year in the perhaps beginning of the 21st-century. Director Burton Beerman and past director Marilyn Shrude should be congratulated on their efforts in keeping a world-class festival thriving.

## View from Toledo

### BRIAN BICE

Bowling Green University Music Department presents its *21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. David Crumb's *Soundings*, Joe L. Alexander's *Two Bryant Songs*, William Ryden's *Three Rags for Violin and Viola*, the American premiere of Terry Riley's *Olson III*, Yung Wa Son's *Prayers in the Wind*, and Jason Eckardt's *Tangled Loops*. October 28. 18th-Century Gallery, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH.

David Crumb's *Soundings* (1994) is an interesting work for clarinet, bassoon, and piano (performed here by Kevin Schempf, Nancy Lutes, and Robert Satterlee). Crumb combines non-teleological aspects of recent music with extended piano writing techniques explored earlier in the century. The three instruments share various melodic lines throughout. At the onset, a tremolo constantly sounds, giving the piece a somewhat unstable feeling. The composer tends to avoid large instrumental ranges in the thematic ideas. While Crumb "striv[es] for a definite sense of comprehensibility," the piece is nevertheless hard to understand. This was due, in part, to the wealth of ideas presented -- such richness that paradoxically made for much listening pleasure.

*Two Bryant Songs*, by Joe L. Alexander, are based on the poetry of William Cullen Bryant and set for soprano, clarinet, and piano. As many, Alexander attempts to imitate the imagery presented in the text through the music. Here, when the text referred to a bird, the clarinet warbled a light, fluttering theme. As with more traditional vocal music, the melodic ideas are often exchanged between voice and instruments. Both songs have textural, color and timbral similarities. The second song ("November") utilizes a much wider range than the first ("These Prairies Glow with Flowers"), and was the more engaging. The two songs, however, are both quite charming and the performers (Deborah Norin-Kuehn, Shempf, and Jane Solose) did a wonderful job.

Jason Eckhardt's *Tangled Loops* was one of the more brilliant pieces on the program. This was more of an ensemble piece, rather than a saxophone solo with piano. The work's perpetual motion continued without much of a break until the end. Thematic ideas were well nigh incessantly bounced around between the players. Despite having little that could be distinguishable as a melodic line, the listener could get a sense that the ideas and motives introduced towards the beginning repeat throughout the work, but in no obvious manner. Combining this aspect with the wide range and leaps in the instrumental parts made for a very appealing work. This performance by John Sampen and Marilyn Shrude brought out all the best qualities.

# Calendar

December 1

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Takemitsu's *Ceremonial* and Berg's *Violin Concerto*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Stanford Chamber Chorale. Memorial Church, Stanford University, CA.

John Corigliano and his *String Quartet No. 1*. Williams Hall, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA.

*The Music of Lei Liang*. Keller Room, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

December 2

Britten's *The Little Sweep*, directed by Harriet March Page. Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through December 17.

December 3

Stanford Wind Ensemble. Dinkelspiel Auditorium, Stanford University, CA.

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

December 4

San Francisco Contemporary Players in Chou Wen-chung's *Echoes from the Gorge*, Harrison's *Simfony 13*, Tanaka's *Polarization*, Festinger's *Crossfire*, and Bazelon's *Propulsions*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

*First Monday*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

December 6

Kyle Gann's *Custer and Sitting Bull*. The Kitchen, New York, NY.

67th birthday of Henryk Górecki.

December 7

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Robin Holloway's *Third Concerto for Orchestra*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

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

December 9

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Concerto for Clarinet and Small Orchestra* performed by the Palo Alto Philharmonic Orchestra. Cubberly Theater, Palo Alto, CA.

December 10

87th anniversary of the birth of Morton Gould.

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Sing Nowell* performed by the Cantabile Children's Chorus, Los Altos Methodist Church, Los Altos, CA.

December 11

92nd birthday of Elliott Carter.

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

December 13

NEC Symphony in the premiere of Elliot Schwartz's *Mehitabel's Serenade*, plus Roussel's *Petite Suite*. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

December 14

Callithumpiano Consort. Brown Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

December 16

San Francisco Symphony in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

December 18

Junior Massachusetts Youth Wind Ensemble. Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA.

December 22

NEW MUSIC Open Performance Party. NEW MUSIC House, 9 Crestwood Drive, San Rafael, CA.

December 26

74th birthday of Earle Brown.

December 28

104th anniversary of the birth of Roger Sessions.

December 30

96th anniversary of the birth of Dmitri Kabalevsky.

# Chronicle

October 1

Chen Yi's *Duo Ye* performed by Xiaomin Liang. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

October 2

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in Carter's *Tempo e Tempi*, San Martin's *Rhondabout*, Martino's *Serenata Concertante*, and Kim's *Now and Then*. Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco, CA. "Kim's 10-minute cycle, from 1981, sets texts by Chekhov, Yeats and Beckett" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 10/4/00].

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

October 3

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

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

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

October 4

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Mahler's *Symphony No. 7*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. "The combination of Mahler, Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony makes for a pretty reliable powerhouse nowadays" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 10/6/00].

Premiere of Glass's *Symphony No. 5*. Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY. "Its subject is, basically, everything. A 12-movement, 97-minute work for orchestra, chorus, children's chorus and vocal soloists, it begins with the Hindu 'Great Hymn of Creation,' which describes a time before the creation of the universe, and ends with the 'Dedication of Merit,' a Buddhist prayer in which one asks to be worthy 'to dispel the misery of the world.' Between them are thoughts on love, evil, suffering, compassion, death, judgment and paradise, in that order, drawn from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Mayan, Hawaiian, African and Asian sacred texts and poetry. . . . 'I called it a symphony rather than an oratorio because I didn't want it to be seen as a religious work,' Mr. Glass said" [The New York Times].

October 5

Joan Jeanrenaud. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

Z *Program 8 (Infinity)*, with Pamela Z, Miya Masaoka, and The Qube Chix. Theater Artaud, San Francisco, CA.

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

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

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

October 6

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

October 7

Premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA. Through October 28. "[W]ith such strong forces at work in this new opera, it is sad to report that its music fails to show up. . . . Whereas most composers appeal to the public for approval, [Heggie] has gone to performers. Principally a writer of songs, Mr. Heggie is a proficient flatterer of the human voice. . . . [A] series of important singers, charmed by the easy, unthreatening flow of his music, not to mention his considerable personal appeal, have carried the Heggie name to the public in their concerts. . . . [N]ice as Mr. Heggie's musical gifts may be, they are no match for the explosive issues and episodes entrusted to him. Singers are accommodated, schmoozed and made comfortable; and when high drama is required, Mr. Heggie gives us a drumroll, a few timpani whacks and a brass crescendo. . . . There is nothing musically offensive about *Dead Man Walking*, but to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, there's not much there there. The aesthetics of ingratitude take an artist only so far, and this is subject matter with far greater needs. . . . Heggie would have done well to turn his orchestration over to a professional" [Bernard Holland, The New York Times, 10/9/00]. "That Heggie, 39, can write a beautiful melody and embellish it with lush tonal harmonies derived from Strauss and Debussy was never in doubt" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 10/9/00]. "I do not know who will compose the first great opera of the 21st century. But I have a very good idea of how it will be born, and it will not resemble the genesis of *Dead Man Walking*. The composer will approach the director of an opera company with the subject, the concept and the style of the work he or she is burning to write. . . . I also do not know what the first great opera of the 21st century will sound like. But I have a notion that it will not be composed in a musical language that Puccini or Strauss or Berg mastered early in the last century" [Allan Ulrich, The San Francisco Examiner, 10/22/00].

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

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra* performed by the Westmoreland (PA) Symphony Orchestra. Westmoreland, PA. Repeated October 8.

October 8

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

Met Chamber Ensemble in Schoenberg's *Serenade* and Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY. "Hearing them in succession, you were struck by the similarities between composers thought to be at odds during the period" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 10/11/00].

October 9

Iceland Symphony Orchestra in the premiere of Atli Heimir Sveinsson's *Icerap 2000*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

October 10

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

Speculum Musicae, with Susan Narucki, in Carter's *Tempo e Tempi*, Murail's *Désintégrations*, Xenakis's *Eonta*, and Varèse's *Ecuatorial*. Miller Theater, New York, NY.

October 11

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

October 12

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

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

Ensemble 21 presents pianist Marilyn Nonken in Ives's *Sonata No. 2* ("*Concord, Mass. 1840-1860*"), and Finnissy's *North American Spirituals* and *Kemp's Morris*. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY. "You could tolerate not hearing Ives's "*Concord*" *Sonata* too often -- oddly few pianists offer it -- if every performance were as fresh, as inviting, as cogent and as delectable in sound and gesture as Marilyn Nonken's . . . . Ms. Nonken is a pianist from music's leading edge, associated with new works and with pieces whose challenges have withstood the last half century, pieces like the Barraqué *Sonata*. . . . *Concord*, for her, is an old friend and a classic, and she made it sound as fluent as Schubert if, like Schubert, prone to eddies and strangenesses in the musical flow. Her dominant qualities would be advantages in any music: lightness in attack, clarity of texture, singing lines (and singing chords), variety of nuance, certainty in defining climaxes and in moving toward or away from them, a sense that the end of a movement must matter, as witness her deft conclusion to a brilliant account, at once fantastical and purposeful, of the "Hawthorne" movement, or her way of making the disintegration at the end of "Thoreau" secure and affirmative. . . . As its title implies, *North American Spirituals*, like the "*Concord*" *Sonata*, uses American vernacular material. But where Ives's music has the feel of fingers -- as if it were a tour of the country finding everyone playing the piano, playing hymns in churches, songs in parlors, ragtime in saloons, marches and quadrilles in community halls -- Mr. Finnissy's sources are discovered in a more distant and rarefied fashion. At its best, and helped by a beautiful performance, his piece suggested a neglected churchyard, with tombs (hymns and spirituals) garlanded by ivy, their inscriptions partly effaced by lichens. *Kemp's Morris* found Ms. Nonken, always precise and poetic at the keyboard, no less so when raising her arms to play the little bells attached to her fingers" [Paul Griffiths, *The New York Times*, 10/17/00].

October 13

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

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

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

October 14

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

October 15

Haskell Small in his *Symphony for Solo Piano*. Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art, Kanazawa, Japan. Repeated October 22, Hayama. "[*Symphony*] received its world premiere in April 1999 at Washington DC's Phillips Collection. It was subsequently performed in New York City at Columbia University's Miller Theatre in May of that year" [Internet release]. "[A] serious and substantial composition that deserves a permanent place in the keyboard repertory" [Tim Page, *Washington Post*].

JJ Hollingsworth's *For Five* and *Gabriel's Calling*, Max Simonic's *Sonata de Camera* and *Eight Thousand to the Bar*, Thomas Goss's *Uriel's Flame*, and Alexis Alrich's *Six Up*, performed by Bay Brass. Old First Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA.

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Reflections on the Hudson* performed by the Baytown Symphony Orchestra, conducted by David Corder. Rundell Auditorium, Lee College, Baytown, TX.

October 16

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

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

October 17

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

October 18

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

October 19

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

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

October 20

Arman Trio presents Benjamin Lees's *Piano Trio No. 2 ("Silent Voices")*. Auditorium Francis Poulenc, Paris, France. Through November 8, Weill Recital Hall, New York (NY). "'Silent Voices' for piano, violin and cello was premiered at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC on May 31, 1998. . . . Lees's other major Holocaust work, *Symphony No. 4 (Memorial Candles)* was commissioned and premiered by the Dallas Symphony in 1985" [Internet release].

October 21

*Elodie Lauten: 50th Year Retrospective. The Four Pillars of Common Sense. The Death of Don Juan*. Multimedia/Cybercast, [www.theconstructioncompany.org](http://www.theconstructioncompany.org)

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

*Throatsinging Competition Festival*. First Congregational Church, Berkeley, CA.

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

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

Kurt Weill's *Lady in the Dark*. Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY.

Rogue Valley (OR) Symphony performs Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Millennium Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*. Rogue Valley, OR. Repeated October 22.

October 23

77th birthday of Ned Rorem.

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

October 24

Patti Monson in Bresnick's *Conspiracies*, Dick's *Afterlight*, Higdon's *Rapid Fire*, Meltzer's *Rumors*, and Reich's *Vermont Counterpoint*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY. "*Vermont Counterpoint* . . . offered a consonant, chirpy, rhythmically interlocked backdrop of flute and piccolo lines, against which Ms. Monson's live solo line danced, moving into the harmonies and around the rhythms" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 10/28/00].

October 25

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

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

October 26

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

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

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

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Matthew Malsky's *Ancient Devices*, Tom Lopez's *Aspect Ratio*<sup>#</sup>, Eric Chasalow's *The Furies*, and four selections from Carl Stone's *Guelagueta*. Kobacker Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH. Through October 28.

October 27

73rd birthday of Dominick Argento.

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

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

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

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Dennis DeSantis's *Breaking Training*, Paul Nauert's *Spirit*, G. Bradley Bodine's *Rhapsodia*, Jean Milew's *Awakening*, Vladimir Tomic's *Dual*, Karl Korte's *Distant Pentachords*, and the Midwest premiere of Terry Riley's *Tread on the Trail*. Bryan Recital Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Amy Kucera's *David*, Mikel Kuehn's *Double Labyrinth*, Terry Riley's *Ritmos and Melos*, Robert Gibson's *Mirage*, Toru Takemitsu's *A Bird Came Down The Walk*, and Annette LeSiege's *Reflections*. Jeffrey Hass's *Keyed Up*, Alice Gomez's *Bonampak*, Robert J. Frank's *Part of the Wind*, Joseph Koykkar's *Impulse*, Burton Beerman's *Playthings*, and excerpts from Terry Riley's *Chanting the Light of Foresight*. Kobacker Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

October 28

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

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. Anthony Iannaccone's *West End Express*, Braxton Blake's *Dorothy Parker Songs*, and Jennifer Higdon's *Blue Cathedral*, performed by the Bowling Green Philharmonia, conducted by Emily Freeman Brown. Shafer Mahoney's *Fast Forward* (with flutist Kathryn Thomas Umble), Warren Gooch's *The Stones Speak of Eternity*, and Evan Chamber's *Polka Nation*, performed by the Bowling Green Wind Ensemble, conducted by Bruce Moss. October 28. Kobacker Hall, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.

*21st Annual New Music and Art Festival*. David Crumb's *Soundings*, Joe L. Alexander's *Two Bryant Songs*, William Ryden's *Three Rags for Violin and Viola*, the American premiere of Terry Riley's *Olson III*, Yung Wa Son's *Prayers in the Wind*, and Jason Eckardt's *Tangled Loops*. October 28. 18th-Century Gallery, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH. Through October 28.

Seattle Creative Orchestra -- with Philip Gelb, Thomasa Eckert, and Chad Kirby -- in John Cage's *Ryoanji*, Christopher Shainin's *By Night* and Tom Baker's *Three Pieces for Strings*. Seattle, WA.

October 29

*Paul Bowles: Words and Music*. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY.

# 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. An ASCAP composer, he recently completed an opera on Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and an oratorio (*The Creation*).

BRIAN BICE is a graduate music student, euphonium player, and composer at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH.

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*.

PATTI DEUTER is Associate Editor of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC and a Bay Area pianist.

JEFF DUNN is a systems analyst and freelance critic with a B.A. in music and a Ph.D. in Education. He is an avid collector of recorded performances of 20th-century music, a dedicated opera-goer, and a composer of piano and vocal music. His post-modernistic career has included stints as a ranger-naturalist, geologic explorationist, and geography professor. He now serves on the board of directors for 20th Century Forum and is a Bay Area correspondent for 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC.

WALT ERICKSON is a freelance writer/critic living in New York City.

JANOS GEREKEN is the Arts Editor of the Post Newspaper Group.

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. 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*.

D.L. MECKLER holds a doctorate in composition from the University of California, San Diego. He writes regularly for *Paris New Music Review* and 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC.

SCOTT MENHINICK is the Promotion & Marketing Coordinator for Gunther Schuller's GM Recordings, Inc.

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