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Foxy Composer-Producer

MARK ALBURGER

Composer Jim Fox runs Cold Blue Music Recordings in Southern California. I caught up with him recently via phone.

FOX: Sorry that I couldn't make our earlier phone dates. I've been in and out of the recording studio all week.

ALBURGER: What were you up to there?

FOX: Working on a recording of mine for the Ants label. The CD will be made up of two pieces: *in the same river*, a 40-minute primarily solo piano piece from '81, which will share the disc with an even earlier piece of mine -- *Drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush* -- for fifteen untrained voices, small chimes, and tape. Ants Records is an interesting and successful little Italian company. When it started, it released only music by Italian composers, but now it has branched out to an international roster. Over the past couple of years, Ants's owner/director Giovanni Antognozzi, who also runs the Silenzio new music distribution service, has put out about 20 records, which is the productivity fast lane. With Cold Blue, I'm lucky to get four to six CD's out per year.

ALBURGER: When did you start Cold Blue?

FOX: In the early 80's, at a time when I found myself involved with organizing and participating in a number of Los Angeles new-music concert ventures: The biggest one I put together was a two-day / 12-hour / 12-composer mini-fest -- with each composer presenting an hour of music. In that context, I suppose starting a record label isn't overly strange. However, since money was very tight then -- I clerked in a bookstore and subsisted on Top Ramen -- it was an impractical idea if not a strange one.

Cold Blue released ten discs and then went belly up in '85, when my two primary distributors went out of business. I suspect that the loss of the great one-of-a-kind New Music Distribution Service was a severe blow to many small labels. The mid 80's was also the dawn of CD's -- and I didn't even own a CD player. Switching to CD production and trying to keep the company afloat without distributors was an unattractive proposition. So, I let Cold Blue drift into oblivion.

Skipping ahead to 2000, I found myself dissatisfied with a contract I received from a record company that was going to release a CD of my music. I felt that the contract was considerably lacking in artist-friendliness. Since we -- new music labels and composers alike -- usually are not in a high-stakes game, i.e., raking in riches with this music, the labels that populate this world should at least make a good attempt to be as artist-friendly as possible.

So, I passed on the contract and phoned some composers and asked, "If Cold Blue was revived, would you care to be onboard?" Of those I initially spoke with, all were very enthusiastic. So Cold Blue came back into being in December of that year, releasing all new material, not reissues of the records from the 80's, which I let slowly reappear a couple of years later.

ALBURGER: What about the reissues?

FOX: In the spring of '02, I reissued 1984's popular Cold Blue anthology, which contained the music of 13 composers, including Chas Smith, Michael Byron, Daniel Lentz, James Tenney, Peter Garland, Michael Jon Fink, Ingram Marshall, Harold Budd, Rick Cox, me, and others. And I added a lovely David Mahler "bonus track" to the CD.

The seven 10-inch discs that originally were produced in 1982-83 -- music by Lentz, Garland, Cox, Read Miller, Barney Childs, Fink, and Smith -- I reissued as a three-CD boxed set simply entitled The Complete 10-Inch Series from Cold Blue in the fall of 2003.

ALBUEGER: What about the name Cold Blue?

FOX: Honestly, I don't remember where the name came from. I've used it since the mid 70's as the name of my BMI publishing company.

ALBURGER: I started my interview with Mike Fink saying that he and I should provide what Cold Blue tends to lack: program notes. And then I turn to your *Last Things* CD, and there's all sorts of copy!

FOX: Those notes, written by Chris Hobbs, Carl Stone, Wadada Leo Smith, and Dan Lentz exist solely because that CD was supposed to be issued, as mentioned before, on another label -- and that other label wanted notes. As I prepared to put out the CD on Cold Blue, I felt that if the folk who wrote the notes were kind enough to do so, I should not toss the notes, so they became part of the *Last Things* package.

And notes are not completely foreign to Cold Blue's other CDs: Byron's first CD had notes by Richard Teitlebaum, Larry Polansky's four-voice canons CD had notes explaining the basics of mensuration canons, and the 3-CD set had notes by WNYC's New Sounds producer John Schaefer and relevant quotations from other sources.

I'm not completely blind to the issue of notes. I know that reviewers and radio show hosts usually want and often need background info on composers, performers, and the music itself. They need this info to help them do their job. So, reviewers and radio folk who receive promo copies of Cold Blue's releases all receive extensive supplementary notes. And, should a record purchaser desperately need to know some of this info, it all also appears on Cold Blue's website [www.coldbluemusic.com]. But, basically, I want to encourage those who pick up the CD's to listen to the music without the burden of too many preconceptions and pigeonholes.

ALBURGER: When and where were you born?

FOX: Indianapolis, 1953.

ALBURGER: How did you meet Mike Fink?

FOX: I met him in Redlands, California; where we both studied with Barney Childs in the late 70's.

I met Barney in Chicago in '74. He and I began corresponding after that, and a year or so later, I came out here. Barney was an absolutely wonderful friend to me when I got out to California, and he remained a close friend until his death. He was a completely interesting guy and an interesting composer too. He had been a Rhodes Scholar in English Literature. He had edited poetry reviews and taught poetry. He had been Dean of Deep Springs College. After a largely self-taught background in composition, he studied at Tanglewood with Copland and Chavez. He wrote all sorts of music, though he's most often associated with his chance-based and improv-based experimental things. He loved teaching. He loved cigars and bourbon.

ALBURGER: Initially, you studied in the Midwest?

FOX: Yes. After high school, I floated about for a couple of years at Butler University, which was just down the street from my house, as an undeclared major, taking whatever courses caught my fancy at the moment. I had started writing music or at least very roughly hacking away at it -- toward the end of high school.

Since I wasn't an actual music student at the university, I would have to sneak, i.e., lie, my way onto student concerts there. At one such event, I had an eclectic little four-movement string quartet performed. After that, the music school dean suggested that I should leave.

ALBURGER: That's off to a good start as the rebellious composer!

FOX: Oh, it wasn't like that, although that would've made a much better story here. The powers that be actually liked the quartet a great deal. They suggested that I should leave because they couldn't offer much in the way of composition training; they didn't have a full-time composer on the faculty at that time.

Anxious to get out of Indianapolis, I decided that I should head off to the bright lights of Chicago to try my luck as a music student, so I interviewed with composition teachers at Northwestern, DePaul, and a couple for the small conservatories there. I hit it off with DePaul's primary composition teacher, Phil Winsor, so I finished my undergraduate work in music there.

ALBURGER: Your musical background previous to this was...?

FOX: Varied and haphazard: I played violin as a little kid, but got tired of getting razed on the playground, so I got a very cheap guitar. Its pick guard was painted on and its strings were an inch above the frets. It was nearly impossible to play, so that pursuit didn't last long. Then I took piano lessons for a couple of years with the nuns at my grade school. This was certainly less than enlightening and inspiring. But by seventh grade, I found myself playing rock-n-roll organ in various unsuccessful and deafening bands and, a little later, piano in blues bands.

In one of the blues bands, we had a string bass player who was very odd and always extremely high -- this was the late 60's. He knew a bit about what was happening in 60's jazz. He played a recording of Pharaoh Sanders for me, and it just blew my mind, so I immediately threw myself into listening to Sanders, Ayler, Shepp, and a list of others too long to start into here

Around this same time, a high school chum, who also was always very high, introduced me to European contemporary concert music, particularly the Penderecki, Ligeti, and Stockhausen stuff on DGG and RCA's *The New Music* series and the *Odyssey Music of Our Time* series with such American composers as Maxfield, Oliveros, Ashley, and Lucier. I believe that the Nonesuch series of new music recordings was also just coming alive at that time. Well, this music also blew my mind. At the time, it seemed absolutely vibrant. This was, of course still the late 60's and early 70's -- the tail end of the experimental-music explosion that ripped through classical, jazz, and pop spheres and often blurred the traditional boundary lines that separated them.

I haunted record shops, buying discs by Cage and Feldman and Carter and Penderecki and Ayler and innumerable others. My immersion in these soon became an oddly skewed education in itself, as I acquainted myself with whatever I could find in the way of recorded music of living composers. In Indianapolis, we had nothing but traditional concert music and traditional jazz performances. So, you see, recordings have always been very important to me.

I also haunted local libraries, which weren't so pitifully maintained back then as they are now, checking out whatever 20th-century scores they had, Stravinsky ballets and such, and whatever theory books were around, including the rather weird ones, such as the Schillinger set. I also read Cage's *Silence*. I came upon Source Magazine, jam-packed with wonderfully strange scores, many of them by West Coast composers. I also came across the various publications from Experimental Music Catalogue in England, which included scores by Parsons, Cardew, Bryars, Hobbs, White, et al. Both Source and the EMC booklets had a wealth of scores that proposed non-traditional ways of making concert music--conceptual scores, graphic scores, prose scores, minimalist scores, music utilizing homemade instruments. A friend had a copy of the book of scores edited by La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, *An Anthology*, so I also had some familiarity with early pieces by Young and Nam-June Paik, the pre-Lennon Yoko Ono, Terry Jennings, and many others, particularly those associated with the Fluxus movement.

Through new music recordings and whatever I could dig up in the way of books and scores, I was somewhat oddly though broadly self-educated in composition and new-music concepts. So I came to my composition teachers with a rather strong self-motivation, and a focused though flexible idea of where I wanted to take my music, and a certain understanding of what was going on or immediately had been going on. And, basically, my teachers were kind enough to support what I chose to pursue compositionally.

ALBURGER: What did your music sound like early on?

FOX: At the very, very beginning, it was an absolutely silly hash of Bartók and Penderecki and Carter and god knows who or what else. Awful stuff! For the most part, it was traditionally notated, but I did pen an early choral work that included coughing and muttering and glottal strokes. This was around 1971-72.

In Chicago, my music became a more focused or perhaps more recognizably mine. My instrumental and my electronic/tape pieces at this point were often textural, sometimes structurally laid out on graph paper before being rendered into somewhat traditional music notation. I worked with free time, with repetition, and dabbled with graphic notation and verbal scores. By '75, I had an early voice of sorts -- it was music that was generally quiet and slow with either a textural or a slightly pointillistic sense to it. Some of it was diatonic and some was freely atonal. I couldn't say that it was a direct offshoot of any one strong influence. It was simply something I arrived at as an amalgam of the many composers and many types of music I had been listening to over the preceding years, mixed with scores I'd been looking at and books I'd read, all filtered through my general take on things -- my sense of what I wanted to hear at the moment.

ALBURGER: What was your reaction to moving from the Midwest to California?

FOX: Delight and shock. Redlands, which is basically a desert oasis, seemed a very odd environment after the damp green of Indiana and Illinois. I arrived in Redlands in middle of the summer, a season that doesn't provide the kindest introduction to the place. It threw oven-baking heat in my face. And it was terribly smoggy, because L.A.'s particle-filled air blows out there and gets caught in a pocket formed by the mountains that roughly enclose the town on three sides.

But, I got to like the desert climate and perhaps understand it a bit. A desert retreat that I visited twice and I enjoyed very much was the Dorland Mountain Colony, which was in a desert area east of Temecula, California. It homesteaded in the 1910's, I believe, by Mrs. Dorland, a former concert pianist and friend of Bartók, and her husband, a math or science professor at USC. The couple built adobe structures and planted some oaks. After her husband's death, some of Mrs. Dorland's former piano students banded together to set aside the area surrounding her home as a nature preserve on which a small artist colony was built.

The colony was lively: snakes, deer, fox, and countless jackrabbits. I enjoyed getting up to hike at dawn, so I could watch the fox and deer and rabbits before they disappeared during the heat of the day which could be over 100 degrees.

Tragically, this lovely desert getaway burned down in one of the many large brush fires that swept Southern California a little over a year ago -- right after the release of my *The City the Wind Swept Away*, which was written during my first stay there.

ALBURGER: After your studies at Redlands you didn't stick around the local environs.

FOX: I fled to L.A., where I lived in Hollywood in an \$85-a-month apartment. A good number of years later, I drifted a bit west of there to Culver City. Then further west to Venice, where I am now, and where the air is as good as it gets in this town. And where, until some recent extreme overdevelopment in the adjoining Marina del Rey, there was also some sense of space.

ALBURGER: Did you immediately involve yourself in the L.A. new-music community?

FOX: When I got to L.A. in '77, I sort of kept my ears open to what was going on. But, you know, I didn't find much that really excited me. The prevailing non-straight-ahead composer collective, the Independent Composers Association (ICA), was too sprawling or unfocused for me, and I've never been a gung-ho joiner of anything. So, I thought, why not do a series of concerts of my own devising, which would have just the music I liked? So, with the help of Fink and a few others, I did concerts that included my music with somewhat simpatico composers and friends Fink, Cox, Smith, Lentz, and others.

ALBURGER: How did you meet all these folk, for instance, Harold Budd?

FOX: I met Harold soon after I got out here through Barney [Childs], one of his close friends. I knew some of Harold's early work through Source Magazine and some of his 1970s work through Peter Garland's *Soundings* -- the great periodical-like series of volumes of scores that was published for perhaps 10 years. Peter published a lot of Budd.

I met Rick [Cox] when he came out to Redlands from Milwaukee, where he had studied with Barney at the Wisconsin College Conservatory. He came out to visit Barney and he stayed in California. Marty Walker was associated with Redlands as a student of new-music clarinetist Philip Rehfeldt. Chas Smith I met through Michael Fink, whom we talked about a bit earlier.

At Redlands and for a year after my time there, I had a little improv group that included Cox and Walker and some others, including drummer and poet Read Miller. It wasn't a bad little group, and we put out an LP on the Advance label in '78 or '79. We combined a very vaguely new-jazz sensibility with some rather lovely textures.

I knew Garland though his *Soundings* Press. I had corresponded with him shortly after getting to California, and later met him face-to-face when I was in Maine in the late seventies. I was attending that Bennington composers thing and very quickly -- within minutes! -- found that I had no interest in what any of the other composers there were doing. After one evening of listening to that crowd chat, I hightailed it for the liquor store. I spent another day there, sufficiently numbed with booze, then I cut out to visit Garland.

And other Cold Blue folk just seemed to wander into my life one way or another. Many Cold Bluers had roots at CalArts including Fink, Smith, Garland, Michael Byron, John Luther Adams, who interviewed me on his old radio show in the early '80s, before we got together in the Cold Blue way. Others, including Polansky and Peters, I met through correspondence or at a New Music America event or some other similar thing.

ALBURGER: With respect to what you and your Cold Blue associates do as composers, some have heard in the work a "West Coast Sound."

FOX: Well, environment and music are often seen as interrelated, and often may be interrelated. However, with Cold Blue, I simply put out what I like -- I don't see the point in doing otherwise.

ALBURGER: I liked what Daniel Lentz said about your CD *Last Things*: "This is music that sounds like it was made in California -- not the California of celluloid freeway madness, but rather that California of cool northern beaches or the Mojave Desert as seen in the stark intimacy of Joshua Tree or even the remembered despair of the landscape around Donner Pass." In the piece *The Copy of the Drawing* on that same CD, the barely heard voice at times reminds me of the seductive one in Lentz's *Song(s) of the Sirens*.

FOX: I've really enjoyed that piece of Dan's since I first heard it 25-plus years ago.

The voice in *The Copy*, Janyce Collins, whispers very short excerpts from a collection of letters sent to the Mt. Wilson Observatory in the 1930s. The collection was edited into a book by Sarah Simons and published by the Museum of Jurassic Technology. The letters, which aren't written by scientists, just "regular folk," though perhaps not always "stable" folk, come from Australia and America and elsewhere and contain wild and sometimes mesmerizing cosmological and theological and philosophical and scientific theories, along with some personal stories. I didn't want to set the letters directly but, rather, distill some sort of abstract essence from them, so I sliced them up into a series of cut-up poems, which I used in the piece.

ALBURGER: Is Cold Blue doing well now?

FOX: Not too badly. I'm making more money from my day job now than I did 20 years ago. And roughly a third of what I make has been going into the company -- which I suppose makes me a madman or an idiot! And I've gotten some Copland funding and other funding.

Chas Smith's music is kinda popular. He's an interesting guy, the person who would be handy to have around if you're in a party that's marooned on an uncharted island. If he can conceive of something, he can make it. For the past year, he's been constructing and helping design a massive installation that has three large rooms that mechanically move about for artist Paul McCarthy, with whom he's worked for years. He has built an impressive machine shop in his backyard, next to the very professional multi-room recording studio that he built years ago. And when I say "built," I mean he did absolutely everything except pour the concrete slabs that it sits on. He also builds his own pedal steel guitars out of titanium, and, of course, designs and constructs the enormous sculptural objects that he uses as instruments. Besides his new-music activities, he regularly plays with country-western bands.

ALBURGER: Do you ever record at Chas's?

FOX: I recorded there a number of years ago, but now it's set up to primarily accommodate his own work, and only his own music comes from there. I record at other places, such as Architecture, a studio run by Scott Fraser, a top-flight engineer and musician who has wonderful ears. His studio, which is in the Mt. Washington area of L.A., southwest of Pasadena, has become so popular with local musicians that it's often very hard to book anymore.

ALBURGER: On the do-it-yourself lines, I notice that you often provide the photography for Cold Blue albums.

FOX: I slowly eased into doing the design work and some of the photography for the Cold Blue packages. At first, I was shy about it, so I had someone else do the first few CD's. But I found myself standing over the designer's shoulder, breathing down his neck with very specific thoughts, thus, it wasn't too much fun for him. So I took it up and really enjoy it, and now I do all the Cold Blue art. And this sort of thing is oddly enough becoming a tiny cottage industry for me. I've photographed and designed two packages for New World Records, and start another for them in a month. For their Jim Tenney *Postal Pieces* CD, I drove around out in scrub-desert communities all day photographing mailboxes until I found the just one. I've also done a couple Capstone designs and am currently finishing one for Mode Records.

As a photographer, I only do very limited, easy stuff. I use a lot of found images that I may adjust, such as tint or digitally paint black and white shots. I buy photos on eBay or at yard sales -- large random lots, which often include family photos of Little Bess and Fluffy the Dog -- all dead now, I guess, and here I am buying their pictures. So there's a rather spooky aspect to it. A particularly wonderful source of pictures that I've exploited recently is the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI) in L.A., which is right next to the mesmerizing Museum of Jurassic Technology on Venice Boulevard. CLUI has been very kind in letting me go through their photo collection and in granting me permission to use their shots.

ALBURGER: We're kindred spirits. I've done posters, production, whatever. I love the found element in art, too. And, of course, both of us seem to be "do it yourself" people.

FOX: Absolutely kindred spirits! I've certainly have admired your 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC magazine, particularly for its coverage of West Coast music.

ALBURGER: And we're both hanging on pretty much due to our own limited financing. Talk me out of it, but I'm finally intending to make good on the name New Music Publications and Recordings. I've been publishing for years, but it's time to start doing CD's.

FOX: You're going into CD's? Great!

Concerts are nice, but obviously they're not the prime way music is heard and enjoyed and absorbed anymore. This is true regardless of the sort of music one might be interested in. And it's a global phenomenon.

In the little, incestuous world of new music, who comes to concerts? The other composers. But who buys recordings or listens to eclectic radio programs? Lots of people, not just other composers, thank God!

ALBURGER: You've been, over the years, seemingly promoting your colleagues' music over your own.

FOX: I don't have difficulty promoting music I like, mine or someone else's. But, while I can say, "Joe's music is more important than the invention of the wheel and, if the post is open, he's well suited for the position of god!" I'd feel a bit strange saying that about myself. So, yes, I tend not to trumpet my own work as much as I should.

Concert Reviews

Top Heavy Twentieth

DAVID CLEARY

San Francisco Symphony, September 12, 2002, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through September 14.

Your reviewer normally covers Boston-area events for 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, but a brief interlude between an arts colony residency at Djerassi and the ensuing plane ride home allowed a unique opportunity to catch a presentation by the San Francisco Symphony. Their September 12 concert was top-heavy with early 20th-century delights.

Igor Stravinsky's *Le Chant du Rossignol* saw its completion delayed by Serge Diaghilev's commissions for the three early ballets that would make this composer famous. Perhaps not surprisingly, notable echoes of these better-known entries tinge *Rossignol*; the swirling colorist effects of *Firebird*, tritone-based bitonality of *Petrushka*, and pithy wind solos of *Le Sacre* are cases in point. But with its Eastern-hued pandiatonicism and somewhat less intense feel, *Rossignol* hews a distinctive cleft in Stravinsky's output. It remains an attractive, imaginatively composed selection that deserves to be programmed more often.

During the 1960's and 1970's, it was fashionable in some quarters (especially those along the East Coast) to dismiss triadic works such as Samuel Barber's *Violin Concerto, Opus 14* as anachronisms. Fortunately, taste has proven fleeting while the best of Barber's oeuvre remains timeless. Much doubtful comment has been made of the apparent incompatibility between the warm breadth of this concerto's first two movements and the motoric brashness of its bantam-sized finale -- while not questioning short slam-bang conclusions grafted onto comparatively more serious main bodies in certain Beethoven string quartets. In fact, Barber's perpetual mobile closer provides much needed relief from the dense luxuriosness of its preceding movements. In brief, unusual, yet effective.

Evocations by Carl Ruggles (perhaps better known in its solo piano version) is a flinty, rock-ribbed masterpiece. In orchestral guise, this relatively compact work can among other things provide a useful introduction to timid listeners unready to approach this composer's more sizable symphonic entries, *Sun-Treader* and *Men and Mountains*. Perhaps more importantly in this regard, Ruggles's orchestration manages to smooth the crags of the keyboard original, slapping on a bit of bright paint to soften the disjunct vertical progressions while imparting a level of timbral contrast that opens new vistas on an otherwise nakedly gritty sonic landscape.

The performances, led by Michael Tilson Thomas, were splendid, as good as those by any symphonic entity anywhere. Any listener still caught up in the notion that the only domestic performances really worth hearing are those by the so-called "big five" US orchestras (Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and Philadelphia) needs to get out more and catch some concerts by this fine group. Stravinsky's piece benefited greatly from Tilson Thomas's conception, which wisely understood that careful attention to timbral beauty is meaningless without cleanliness of ensemble. Lively energy was encountered here in abundance as well as in *Evocations*, which was chock full of the kind of dramatic contrast that makes for exciting listening. Violin soloist Joshua Bell was an enthusiastic exponent of Barber's concerto, sporting excellent intonation, a lovely and focused tone (enlivened by a wonderful left-hand vibrato that was fast and not whiny), and finger/bow technique that transcended formidability into artful effortlessness. The orchestra provided solid backing that did not inundate its guest.

In the Pink

DAVID CLEARY

Chamber Music and Songs by Daniel Pinkham as He Enters his 80th Year. September 24, Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

This concert, the first new music event presented by the New England Conservatory during its 2002-2003 season, offered a generous sampling of recent items from octogenarian Daniel Pinkham's portfolio. It proved to be a memorably good evening of music making

To say that Pinkham's work descends from the Barber-Copland-Menotti wing of 20th-century composition is true; there's a fluid craftiness, ease of speech, and tonal grounding to the harmonies that demonstrate kinship to these aforementioned worthies. But such a statement minimizes this fine composer's distinctive voice as well as his fertile imagination and variety of expression. Even a work as bucolic as the wind quintet *Picnic Music* (1999) possesses energetic underpinnings and a skillful handling of copious amounts of dissonance within an essentially scalar framework. Hearing this piece for the second time, your reviewer was struck tonight by its composer's careful attention to structural balance and varied delineation of timbres (this latter evinced by the multihued duo, trio, and quartet textures encountered throughout). *The Phoenix at Dawn* (2002) takes the three lowest tessitura instruments from this standard grouping and erects a three-movement construct that neatly explores a satisfying midpoint between dark expression and zippy bounce. The last movement, with its Leonard Bernstein-like syncopation interplay involving crotchety horn, bassoon, and clarinet timbres is only the most obvious example. Scored for trumpet, horn, and trombone, *Brass Trio Number 2* (2002) demonstrates subtle hints of jazz in its at times Gershwin-flecked melodic material in the second movement and walking bass accompaniment platforms in the finale. And the piano four-hands entry *Weather Reports: Duet Book for Young Pianists* (1999) shows no condescension to some clueless person's oversimplified notion of what children will respond positively to. Its seven character piece movements are every bit as evocative and engaging as Robert Schumann's music for precocious keyboardists -- and every bit as sturdy.

The two splendid song cycles for baritone voice and piano given this evening both set poetry by James Wright. The earlier of these, *When Love Was Gone* (1993), shows mild influence of Ned Rorem in its periodic use of patterned accompaniments and a felicitous, highly idiomatic manner of vocal writing. But the vertical collections are more clangorous than Rorem's and the melodic lines are notably more chromatic, so any notion of style study is unfounded. *Come, Look Quietly* (2001) dispenses with even these modest echoes, discovering a truly unique sense of self while maintaining some semblance of tie to this approach to song composition. It's a thoughtful collection exhibiting significant depth of feeling, one of Pinkham's finest works. The single song *Love in a Warm Room in Winter* (2002), presented as an encore, is both savvy and solid, an excellent setting to encounter.

Those who know Pinkham well are aware that his knowledge of pre-Classical literature is every bit as deep as that of the newest music (he is among other things an accomplished performer of Baroque repertoire on the organ and harpsichord). His *Concerto for Organ and Wind Quintet* (2000), with its concertino-ripieno alternation of keyboard solo and woodwind group textures as well as second-movement employment of imitative contrapuntal material, is a delightful bow to the music of the 17th century. It also manages to draw a surprisingly strong amount of variety from its four fast-tempo movements.

Performances were top-drawer. The always accomplished Arcadian Winds showed much flexibility in their playing, traversing the neoclassicism of the *Concerto*, the rustic sweetness of *Picnic Music*, and the duskiness of *Phoenix* with ease. Mark Emery, Kimberly Hamill, and Bron Wright from the Huntington Brass Quintet successfully ran the gamut from forceful to expressive to nimble in the *Trio*. Organist James David Christie drew wonderfully varied playing from his single manual positive organ in the *Concerto*. The Hirsch-Pinkas Piano Duo (Sally Pinkas and Evan Hirsch) gave a neatly executed accounting of *Weather Reports*. And singer Joe Dan Harper (excellently backed by pianist Anne Kissel Harper) was sensational in the two cycles and encore song, featuring solid diction, effective stage presence, and a voice that contained both sturdy power and fine tone quality.

Bravos go out from this corner to Pinkham, a first-class tonemeister still going strong as he enters his eighth decade.

Chronicle

November 4

Laurie Anderson's *The End of the Moon*. Los Angeles, CA.

November 5

Bang on a Can All-Stars, with Philip Glass in Glass's *Music in Similar Motion*, *Music in Fifths*, and *Closing from "Glassworks,"* plus Evan Ziporyn's *Dalem and Sangut from "Shadow Bang,"* Michael Gordon's *Light is Calling*, Julia Wolfe's *Big Beautiful, Dark and Scary*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA "[T]he All-Stars . . . boast the unflagging precision needed to give Glass's mechanistic textures the momentum they need. At the same time, there is a rhythmic freedom and breath of spontaneity to their readings that sets them apart from the original versions of the Philip Glass Ensemble" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 11/9/04].

Music from China performs Zhou Long's *The Moon Rising High* and *Mount a Long Wind*, and Chen Yi's *Chinese Fables*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY. "Zhou . . . moved . . . adventurously into the world of contemporary language. . . . Chen's writing is energetic and thoughtfully shaped" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 11/10/04].

November 8

California EAR Unit, including Dorrance Stalvey's *Prevue*, *A Fragment of Silence*, and *PLC -- Extract*. County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

November 12

Marilyn Nonken performs Michael Finnissy's *Verdi Transcription No. XXII ("I Vespri Siciliani")*, Milton Babbitt's *Allegro Peseroso*, Jason Eckardt's *Echoes' White Veil*, and Tristan Murail's *Les Travaux et les Jours*. CNMAT, Berkeley, CA. Marilyn Nonken fabulously interpreted Tristan Murail's *Les Travaux et les Jours!"* [Patti Deuter].

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

November 13

Steve Reich and members of his ensemble in *Drumming (Part I)*, *Dance Patterns*, *Sextet*, *New York Counterpoint*, and *Nagoya Marimbas*. Metropolitan Museum, New York, NY. "They were like Shakers: older men, soberly dressed in white shirts and dark pants, standing and making something simple and solid and beautiful. . . . It has come to this. In 1970 and 1971, when the four parts of *Drumming* were written, they were accounted revolutionary. Now an audience in uptown Manhattan listens to the music in reverent silence and hails its brilliance with enthusiastic applause. It's not so different from a Beethoven performance. Thus are musical works absorbed into the canon. There is no question that Mr. Reich, 68, belongs in that canon. The composer . . . pioneered concepts that are now subsumed in catchwords like 'minimalism' and 'world music' without getting bogged down in anything but seriously pursuing his art" [Anne Midgette, The New York Times, 11/18/04].

Gamelan Galak Tika and founder Evan Ziporyn. Zanek Hall, New York, NY.

November 14

Empyrean Ensemble in *The Influence of Dallapiccola: Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Luigi's Birth*. Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts, University of California, Davis, CA.

November 16

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in Igor Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

November 15

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in *Whispering. Murmuring. Ranting*, including Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together*. Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, CA.

November 17

Out of Bounds. The Paul Dresher Ensemble Electro-Acoustic Band in three world premieres: Ingram Marshall's *In Deserto - Black Rock*, Neil B. Rolnick's *Plays Well With Others*, and James Mobberley's *Fusebox*, plus Dresher's *Din of Iniquity*, *Chord Times Two* and *In the Name(less)*, featuring the Quadrachord (four 14-foot long strings) and Marimba Lumina, the percussion controller invented by Don Buchla. The Forum at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. "[Dresher's music] provided . . . consistent rewards" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 11/19/04].

Carlisle Floyd, Twyla Tharp, and Ray Bradbury are awarded the 2004 National Medal of Arts. Washington, DC.

American Composers Orchestra in Morton Feldman's *De Kooning* and *Why Patterns*, Gerard Grisey's *Vortex Temporaum*, Randall Woolf's *Women at an Exhibition*, Michael Daugherty's *Fire and Blood*, and excerpts from Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park With George*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

Death of Cy Coleman, of heart failure, at 75. New York Hospital, New York, NY. "[He] wrote such pop standards as *Witchcraft*. . . . In 1960, he composed his first full score, *Wildcat*, with lyricist Carolyn Leigh. The show, which was a vehicle for Lucille Ball, contained the hit song *Hey Look Me Over*" [Associate Press, 11/20/04].

November 19

Quartet Euphoria (aka Quartet Eunegyia, Quartet Euquatria, etc.) -- Rachel Huang, violin; Jonathan Wright, violin; Cynthia Fogg, viola; Tom Flaherty, cello -- performing Bartók's *String Quartet No. 3* and Flaherty's *Euphoric Waltzes*. Balch Auditorium, Scripps College, Claremont, CA.

Del Sol Quartet in *Keeril, Gabi, John, and Lou*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum, San Francisco, CA. Through November 21, Dance Palace, Point Reyes.

Compcord! Composers Concordance, in a program featuring Oliver Knussen's *Elegiac Arabesques*, Joseph Pehron's *Organum*, Leslie Bassett's *Jade Garden*, and William Schimmel's *Capriccio Brasilia*. Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY.

Dance to Monk: Choreographers Celebrate the Music of Meredith Monk. St. Mark's Church, New York, NY.

November 20

Margaret Leng Tan plays George Crumb's *Makrokosmos, Volume I and II*, in a 75th-birthday salute to the composer. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "For me, George Crumb, along with John Cage and Henry Cowell, forms a triumvirate -- the three C's, the three intrepid American pioneers of 20th-century avant-garde pianism" [Margaret Leng Tan].

Del Sol String Quartet in Gabriela Lena Frank's *Leyendas: An Andean Walkabout*, John Adams's *John's Book of Alleged Dances*, Lou Harrison's *Quartet Set*, and music by Keeril Makan. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum, San Francisco, CA.

November 21

Nadia Schpachenko performs George Crumb's *Gnomic Variations*. Performing Arts Center, Vacaville, CA.

Orchestra 2001. Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

November 22

Peter Eotvos's *Angels in America* (Tony Kushner). Theatre du Chatelet, Paris, France.

Music from Italy, with Stefano Scodanibbio. The West Coast premiere of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza XVI: Versione per Contrabasso di S. Scodanibbio*, at the request of the composer, the U.S. premiere of Scodanibbio's *Da una certa nebbia*, plus his *Voyage That Never Ends*, and Franco Donatoni's *Lem: Due pezzi per contrabbasso*. County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

November 24

Stefania de Kenessey's *Alto e glorioso Dio*. West End Avenue Church, New York, NY.

November 29

Arditti Quartet in Wolfgang Rihm's *Quartet No. 2*, Brian Ferneyhough's *Quartet No. 3*, Conlon Nancarrow's *Quartet No. 3*, Paul Usher's *Quartet No. 2*, and James Clarke's *String Quartet*. County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

Comment

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you...and then you win.

Mahatma Gandhi

Any naive thoughts that being a good citizen in the musical community would have a ripple effect in the culture at large have been kicked in the ass by the election. I had this Coplandesque naivete about the American spirit, and that's all shot to hell.

Dan Becker
San Francisco Chronicle, 11/8/04

It is remarkable to remember that CBS broadcast these hour-long programs [Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts] without commercial breaks. This was not just a service to the public on the network's part. The savvy CBS executives knew they were scoring points with an hour of excellent television courtesy of Bernstein, a media natural.

Still, the network's commitment to arts education was awesome in comparison with anything on the current scene. Consider this: in the early 1960's CBS commissioned Stravinsky to compose a musical play for television. Titled *The Flood*, the work was broadcast in 1962. Would any network or cable station today commission a living classical composer to create a work for broadcast? Would executives even know who the important living composers are? You can't imagine that *The Flood* would even be rebroadcast today, let alone that a Stravinsky would be commissioned to compose it.

. . . Burned by low ratings for classical music, the network [PBS] is apparently loath to broadcast any program that lasts more than two hours, which eliminates most operas. . . .

The most encouraging sign that Bernstein's mantle as a televangelist for music may be taken up again came last spring, when PBS broadcast a two-hour pilot program for a series to be called *M.T.T. on Music* . . . featur[ing] . . . Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony

Anthony Tommasini
The New York Times, 11/18/04

Early this year the polemical British cultural critic Norman Lebrecht came out with what he called a "rock-solid prediction" that the year 2004 would be the last for the classical record industry. . . .

Yet I have seldom had so many exciting and important new classical music recordings come across my desk as in the last year or so.

Anthony Tommasini
The New York Times, 11/30/04

Writers

MARK ALBURGER is an eclectic American composer of postminimal, postpopular, and postcomedic sensibilities. He is Editor-Publisher of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, an award-winning ASCAP composer of concert music published by New Music, conductor, oboist, pianist, vocalist, recording artist, musicologist, theorist, author, and music critic. He has recently embarked on a project to record his complete works (130 opus numbers) over the next 11 years.

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

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