



**21ST  
CENTURY  
MUSIC**

---

AUGUST 2009

---

#### INFORMATION FOR SUBSCRIBERS

21ST-CENTURY MUSIC is published monthly by 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, P.O. Box 2842, San Anselmo, CA 94960. ISSN 1534-3219.

Subscription rates in the U.S. are \$96.00 per year; subscribers elsewhere should add \$48.00 for postage. Single copies of the current volume and back issues are \$12.00. 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. email: mus21stc@gmail.com.

Typeset in Times New Roman. Copyright 2009 by 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC. This journal is printed on recycled paper. Copyright notice: Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

#### INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

21ST-CENTURY MUSIC invites pertinent contributions in analysis, composition, criticism, interdisciplinary studies, musicology, and performance practice; and welcomes reviews of books, concerts, music, recordings, and videos. The journal also seeks items of interest for its calendar, chronicle, comment, communications, opportunities, publications, recordings, and videos sections. Copy should be double-spaced on 8 1/2 x 11 -inch paper, with ample margins. Authors are encouraged to submit via e-mail.

Prospective contributors should consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), in addition to back issues of this journal. Copy should be sent to 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, P.O. Box 2842, San Anselmo, CA 94960. e-mail: mus21stc@gmail.com. Materials for review may be sent to the same address.

#### INFORMATION FOR ADVERTISERS

Send inquiries to 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, P.O. Box 2842, San Anselmo, CA 94960. e-mail: mus21stc@gmail.com.

# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

August 2009

Volume 16, Number 8

PHILLIP GEORGE	Michael Jackson (1958-2009)	1
MICHAEL MCDONAGH	Love and Rockets SFCCO	3
CHRONICLE	Of June 2009	4
WRITERS		12
ILLUSTRATIONS	i, 2 Michael Jackson 3 Alan Crossman - Plasticity for Sonoglyph and Chamber Orchestra (Tom Nunn [Instrument Inventor and Soloist] and San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra) 4 Loren Maazel, Stanley Drucker, New York Philharmonic 5 Henry Brant - Orbits (Guggenheim Museum) 7 Jim Ryan Birthday Bash (Flux Theatre) 12 Vibe	

# **Editorial Staff**

Mark Alburger  
EDITOR-PUBLISHER

Harriet March Page  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Patti Noel Deuter  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Erling Wold  
WEBMASTER

Alexis Alrich  
Katherine Buono  
Ken Bullock  
David Cleary  
Jeff Dunn  
Phillip George  
Elliot Harmon  
Brian Holmes  
Jeff Kaliss  
John Lane  
Michael McDonagh  
Tom Moore  
William Rowland  
Andrew Shapiro  
CORRESPONDENTS

# Michael Jackson (1958-2009)

## PHILLIP GEORGE

Michael Joseph Jackson (August 29, 1958 – June 25, 2009) Jackson was born the seventh of nine children on August 29, 1958 in Gary, Indiana, an industrial suburb of Chicago, to an African American family. His mother, Katherine Esther Scruse, was a devout Jehovah's Witness, and his father, Joseph Walter "Joe" Jackson, a steel mill worker who performed with an R&B band called The Falcons. Jackson had three sisters, Rebbie, La Toya, and Janet, and five brothers, Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon, and Randy.

He showed talent early in his life, performing in front of classmates during a Christmas recital at the age of five. In 1964, he and Marlon joined the Jackson Brothers -- a band formed by brothers Jackie, Tito, and Jermaine -- as backup musicians playing congas and tambourine. Jackson later began performing backup vocals and dancing; at the age of eight, he and Jermaine assumed lead vocals, and the group's name was changed to The Jackson 5.

Starting in 1972, Jackson released a total of four solo studio albums with Motown, among them *Got to Be There* and *Ben*, released as part of the Jackson 5 franchise.

The Jackson 5 signed a new contract with CBS Records in June 1975, joining the Philadelphia International Records division, later Epic Records, and renaming themselves The Jacksons.

In 1978, he starred as the scarecrow in the musical, *The Wiz*, and teamed up with Quincy Jones, the film's score arranger. Jones agreed to produce Jackson's next solo album, *Off the Wall*, which included songwriters Rod Temperton, Stevie Wonder, and Paul McCartney, in addition to Jackson himself.

In 1982, he issued his second Epic album, *Thriller*.

While working with Paul McCartney on the two hit singles *The Girl Is Mine* (1982) and *Say Say Say* (1983), the pair became friendly. McCartney told Jackson about the large amount of money he earned from owning music catalogs; he was earning approximately \$40 million a year from other people's songs. Jackson subsequently began buying, selling, and distributing publishing rights to music from numerous artists. In 1985, ATV Music, a music publishing company owning thousands of music copyrights, including the Lennon-McCartney compositions recorded by The Beatles, was put up for sale.

Jackson took an immediate interest in the catalog, but was warned he would face strong competition. Jackson's lawyer contacted McCartney's representative, who clarified that the McCartney was not interested in bidding: "It's too pricey." After Jackson had started negotiations, the former Beatle changed his mind and tried to persuade Yoko Ono to join him in a joint bid, but she declined, so he pulled out. Jackson

eventually beat the rest of the competition in negotiations that lasted 10 months, purchasing the catalog for \$47.5 million.

Jackson's first album in five years, *Bad* (1987), had lower sales than *Thriller*, but was still a substantial commercial success.

In March 1988, Jackson purchased land near Santa Ynez, California to build Neverland Ranch at a cost of \$17 million. He installed Ferris wheels, a menagerie, and a movie theater on the 2,700-acre (11 km<sup>2</sup>) property. A security staff of 40 patrolled the grounds. In 2003, it was valued at approximately \$100 million.

He released his eighth album *Dangerous* in 1991.

In May 1994, Jackson married singer-songwriter Lisa Marie Presley, the daughter of Elvis Presley. At the time, the tabloid media speculated that the wedding was a ploy to prop up Jackson's public image. Jackson and Presley divorced less than two years later, remaining friendly.

In 1995, he released the double album *HIStory: Past, Present and Future, Book I*.

During the Australian leg of the *HIStory* World Tour, Jackson married dermatology nurse Deborah Jeanne Rowe on November 14, 1996 in an impromptu ceremony close to his Sydney hotel room. She gave birth to Michael's first two children: a son, Prince, and a daughter, Paris. The couple divorced in 1999, and remained friends, with Rowe giving full custody of the children to Jackson.

Throughout June of that year, Jackson was involved in a number of charitable events, including an appearance with Luciano Pavarotti for a benefit concert in Modena, Italy.

Six years after his last studio album and after spending much of the late 1990's out of the public eye, Jackson released *Invincible* in October 2001. To help promote the album, a special 30th Anniversary celebration at Madison Square Garden occurred in September 2001 to mark the singer's 30th year as a solo artist. Jackson appeared onstage alongside his brothers for the first time since 1984.

Jackson's third child, Prince Michael Jackson II (nicknamed "Blanket") was born in 2002 as the result of artificial insemination from a surrogate mother and his own sperm cells.

Reports of financial problems for Jackson became frequent in 2006 after the closure of the main house on the Neverland Ranch as a cost-cutting measure.

The 25th anniversary of Thriller was marked by the release of Thriller 25, which added the previously unreleased song For All Time and re-mixes.

On June 25, 2009, Jackson collapsed at his rented mansion at 100 North Carolwood Drive in the Holmby Hills district of Los Angeles. Attempts at resuscitating him by his personal

physician were unsuccessful. He was pronounced dead at 2:26 p.m. local time.

Jackson did not write his songs on paper. Instead he would dictate into a sound recorder; when recording he would sing from memory.



# Love and Rockets

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

We like to think that we live in the light, or as the current phrase goes -- "it's all good" -- when everything really seems to happen in the dark where angels are wrestled with. This came forcibly to mind when I caught the SFCCO's June 13 concert *Restless Dreams* at San Francisco's Old First Church. The program, of eight pieces by eight composers, also bore out music director Mark Alburger's from-the-stage-quip that it was Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony in reverse -- instruments were added instead of subtracted as it progressed. *Restless Dreams* also appeared to go from meditation to conflict, or light to dark.

Philip Freihofner's *Obelisk*, which the composer wrote over a long period and "finalized" for this concert, could be described as meditative and/or minimalist in gesture. We tend to think that only loud pieces are powerful, but Freihofner's soft one, which Rova Saxophone Quartet's Steve Adams played -- he was backed by a repeating figure on synthesizer -- with passion and point, hit home.

Lisa Scola Prosek's *Voodoo Storm*, performed here by clarinetist Rachel Condry, trumpeter Eduard Prosek, cellist Juan Mejia, and pianist Scola Prosek was delicate and expressive, with subtle yet highly individualized part writing -- Condry giving way to Eduard Prosek and vice versa -- and it ended, in mid phrase, as so much in life does.

Davide Verotta's *Verso L'immagine Feroce*, for larger forces under Martha Stoddard, with Verotta on piano, was poetic because it got under one's skin, albeit subtly. It also seemed to incarnate Verotta's concept of an "emotional state . . . that is completely beyond our grasp," and was a far more substantial and convincing piece than his last one, which the SFCCO played this winter.

Michael Cooke's piece was meditative in an entirely different way. His variations on Lu-Chuan Sheng's famous Taiwanese lullaby *A Baby Sleeps*, which had Gangqin Zhao on the plucked-but-much-smaller-than-a-koto guzheng and the composer on the impressive-looking black sheng -- a kind of mouth organ -- found him abandoning his usual bag of metric tricks for something simple and heartfelt, and Alburger led his sizable forces here with unobtrusive grace.

Loren Jones's *Eagle Bear Woman and Two Islands*, for a large ensemble conducted by John Kendall Bailey, was also of Asian inspiration, its second part being in Javanese/Balinese style. And there was a tremendously evocative interplay between the seen -- written notes -- and the unseen -- freely-improvised non-notated parts.

Allan Crossman's *Plasticity*, for Sonoglyph and Chamber Orchestra, was equally well-made. It also got lots of its expressive character from the divergent styles the composer employed. And it was very entertaining to watch Tom Nunn play his homemade amplified with contact mikes sonoglyph -- an electro-acoustic percussion board -- while the orchestra watched him (this was a sort of concerto) or dug into their parts.

Alburger's always a surprising composer and his three-part *King David Suite* (*The Young and The Restless*) provided a series of pleasant jolts. The composer likes to base his pieces on ones by other composers -- he calls their musical structures grids, and the grid, or scaffold here was Arthur Honegger's 1929 cantata *Le Roi David* which Alburger wreaked gleeful havoc on -- he changed its metric and tonal make-up and added discreet but pungent decorations to the original's lean and mean neo-baroque style. Alburger's take on the soap-opera goings-on of this part of the Hebrew Bible -- 2 Samuel -- had the added virtue of being transparently scored, and his orchestra was right on the money throughout.

*Restless Dreams* reached its literal climax with Erling Wold and fognozzle's *In the Stomachs of Fleas*, which the composer in his hilarious onstage intro said was a baldly programmatic piece -- he mentioned Hector Berlioz's 1830 *Symphonie Fantastique*, which has just about everything, including a witches' sabbath. Wold and fognozzle's scenario, which had rats spreading the plague in 1899 San Francisco was even more extreme. Granitic chords assaulted the ear, and the volume -- fognozzle's part was amplified -- made it sound as loud as Varese's *Ameriques* (1918-21), but not as much fun. Still, this was an impressive piece, with the SFCCO, under Alburger, at full bore. And the spectacle of a lightshow, manned by in-the-pews-behind-the-altar fognozzle on way-loud electronics cum SFCCO, made a thunderous but not exactly joyful noise.



# Chronicle

June 4

Clarinetist Stanley Drucker performs Aaron Copland's Clarinet Concerto, with the New York Philharmonic, on a program also featuring Maurice Ravel's Bolero. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. "[F]ew orchestral musicians anywhere have enjoyed such a long and estimable career as Mr. Drucker, a spry 80, who retires at the end of this season after 60 years with the ensemble. After his stellar performance of Copland's Clarinet Concerto it was announced that Mr. Drucker, who has given 10,200 concerts with the orchestra, had set a Guinness World Record for the "longest career as a clarinetist," having performed professionally for 62 years, 7 months and 1 day as of Thursday. A New York City Council member, Gale A. Brewer, described him as 'one of our nation's greatest cultural icons,' and he was named an honorary member of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, the first musician in the orchestra to be accorded that honor. In a film tribute, Philharmonic players, administrators and former music directors praised Mr. Drucker's remarkable musical gifts, energy, niceness, youthful appearance ("he's like Dorian Gray," said the violinist Glenn Dicterow) and full head of hair. Lorin Maazel, the current music director, who also leaves at the end of this season, and Alan Gilbert, who takes over as music director this fall, joined in. Mr. Drucker offered a memorable performance of Copland's two-movement Clarinet Concerto, commissioned in 1947 by Benny Goodman, who found the work technically challenging. Mr. Drucker played the lyrical, nostalgic first movement with soulful elegance and the jazzy cadenza with flair. He offered a vivid, characterful interpretation of the lively second movement, which incorporates elements of North and South American popular styles, including a folk tune from Rio de Janeiro, where Copland began composing the work. The performance, the first of Mr. Drucker's final series of solo appearances with the orchestra this month, received an enthusiastic ovation. The evening finished on a dynamic note with Mr. Maazel leading a vibrant, snappy performance of Ravel's Boléro" [Vivien Schweitzer, The New York Times, 6/5/09].



The TriBeCa New Music Festival. Flea Theater, New York, NY. "The American Contemporary Music Ensemble (better known by its acronym, Acme) opened the festival . . . with four inventive works in the prevailing eclectic style. The curtain-raiser was Caleb Burhans's Down to Earth (2003), a brief, quirky solo cello piece that takes a while to find its voice, then finds it with a vengeance. Its opening pages are a repetitive, slowly evolving figure cast in an unvaryingly steady rhythm. Just before that rhythm wears out its welcome, Mr. Burhans offers a distraction: he splits the cello line into bass and treble melodies, effectively transforming the single strand into a dialogue. . . . Clarice Jensen, the cellist, played the music without inflection at first, but her playing came to life as the music's complications multiplied. Ms. Jensen had a busy evening: she was the only performer heard in all four pieces, and the remaining three occasionally put the cello into the spotlight as well. In Ryan Streber's trio Dust Shelter (2005), Ms. Jensen was joined by Nadia Sirota, the violist, and Kelli Kathman, the flutist. Mr. Streber seems fond of the angularity and chromaticism of the atonal school but tempers those qualities with a hefty measure of harmonic lushness and emotional warmth. He included some oddly compelling effects here as well. The flute, for example, sometimes darted around the viola and cello lines as you would expect it to, but more typically Mr. Streber gave the instrument music low in its range and softly played, so that it sounded almost like a third string line. Nico Muhly's Stride (2006) covers ample stylistic ground in a mere eight minutes: you hear a bouncing chordal figure that calls to mind Sibelius's Second Symphony early in the piece, a Philip Glass-style undulating major second not far into it and patches of Neo-Classical elegance and Tchaikovsky-like lugubriousness in the home stretch. Mr. Muhly's achievement is making this parade of styles into a coherent whole with his own recognizable thumbprint. Ms. Jensen, Ms. Sirota and the violinists Miranda Cuckson and Benjamin Russell closed the concert with Jefferson Friedman's String Quartet No. 3 (2005), a vital, imaginative 30-minute score, packed with unusual timbres, unabashedly rich melodies (played meltingly by Ms. Cuckson and Ms. Sirota) and carefully worked-out themes" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 6/6/09].

June 5

Silk Road Project, celebrating its 10th anniversary. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY. "[The] program . . . [included] Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky's Paths of Parables (2006), with music well suited to the wise and witty spoken texts; Angel Lam's Empty Mountain, Spirit Rain (2006), a touching memorial to a grandmother's death; and Giovanni Sollima's Taranta Project (2008), eliciting virtuosity in many forms, including the crude and comical" [James Oestreich, The New York Times, 6/7/09].

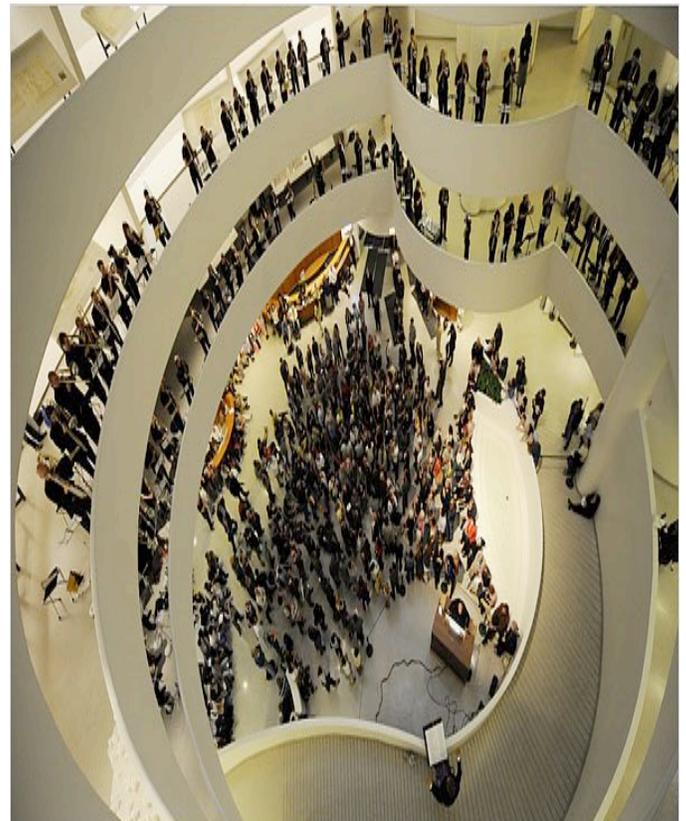
June 6

Silk Road Project, including Uzeyir Hajibeyov's Layla and Majnun presented in a reduced chamber version. Alice Tully hall, New York, NY. This is one of the project's most ambitious efforts to date: a reduction of . . . Hajibeyov's three-and-a-half-hour opera for soloists, chorus and orchestra to a 45-minute version with only the title characters and a small band. Jonathan Gandelsman and Colin Jacobsen, Silk Road violinists, made the arrangement for the Azerbaijani vocalists Alim Qasimov, an acclaimed master of the role of Majnun, and Fargana Qasimova, his daughter and student. . . . Hajibeyov drew inspiration for Layla . . . which appeared in 1908, from having seen *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini (who almost a century before had operatically placed an Italian in Algiers, a Turk in Italy and whatnot). And if, as Mr. Ma rightly said, hybridization can lead to creativity, it can also lead to hokiness at times, and there was a touch of that in what remained of the orchestration here. A few odd juxtapositions of perky instrumental music with desolate song in this tale of love, separation, death and madness may have resulted in part from the compression. None of which mattered when Mr. Qasimov or Ms. Qasimova held forth in spare, deeply expressive laments, tinged and embellished with exquisite subtlety. They sat on a raised platform, facing the audience and barely interacting in this wholly interior drama but communicated eloquently despite the total unfamiliarity of the language and the relative unfamiliarity of the vocal idiom. The . . . program was filled out with colorful instrumental works from 2006 by Gabriela Lena Frank (*Ritmos Anchinos*) and Evan Ziporyn (*Sulvasutra*) and by a three-part Silk Road Suite in modes Korean and Japanese, Turkish, and Azerbaijani" [James Oestreich, *The New York Times*, 6/7/09].

June 10

Orchestra of the League of Composers gives its inaugural performance. Miller Theatre, New York, NY. 'The League has been promoting contemporary music for 85 years and has long sponsored a sizable chamber ensemble. With this concert, it introduced a 37-piece orchestra and got back into the business of commissioning works. . . . [I]n attendance was Elliott Carter, whose . . . In the Distances of Sleep (2006) -- settings of poems by Wallace Stevens -- was presented on this program in an arresting performance featuring the luminous and intelligent singing of Kate Lindsey. Mr. Carter knows all and, at 100, had nothing to lose by being blunt. In the early decades the League and the Society were friendly rivals. Aaron Copland ran the League and promoted the composers 'he liked and approved,' Mr. Carter said, when interviewed by [John] Schaefer. So that is why 'we,' Mr. Carter added, meaning composers with less populist inclinations, became involved with the American branch of the Society. This is a complicated story, and Mr. Carter only touched on it. Though Copland never formally ran the League of Composers, by the mid-1930s he was the power behind it. He saw its mission as fostering distinctively American music and finding ways to connect with the general public. The Society tended to champion the international contemporary composers who practiced complex styles, including 12-tone technique, and

explored new dimensions of sound and rhythm, those whom Virgil Thomson derided as the 'Schoenbergians and the Bang-Bangs.' In any event, both organizations fought for the cause of contemporary music and in 1953 joined forces. Wednesday's concert, with the debut of the orchestra, represents a new burst of activity for the League/I.S.C.M. The orchestra, conducted expertly by the composer Louis Karchin, sounded terrific in this varied and demanding program. It began festively with Britten's *Fanfare for St. Edmundsbury*, a short work for three trumpets and a lesson for young composers in how to write an interesting piece for a public occasion. [Christopher] Dietz's 10-minute *Gharra* was an elemental, atmospheric score in which slinky themes and combative voices struggle to break free of an engulfing, dense, harmonically murky orchestral maze. Alvin Singleton's *After Choice*, one of two commissioned premieres on the program, was an engaging work for string orchestra in which mysterious yet playful plucked lines are juxtaposed with fitful, spiraling yet oddly calm legato lines. Julia Wolfe's *Vermeer Room* is inspired by Vermeer's painting *A Girl Asleep*, which depicts a young woman sitting at a table, dozing, her head propped up by her hand. But from Ms. Wolfe's agitated, harmonically gnashing, brightly colorful score, the sleeping girl is having fitful daydreams. The concert ended with the premiere of Charles Wuorinen's 20-minute *Synaxis*, a boldly complex and texturally transparent work for four solo instruments and orchestra. In its uncompromising way, the music recalls the concertato pieces of Stravinsky. The soloists played brilliantly: Robert Ingliss (oboe), Alan R. Kay (clarinet), Patrick Pridemore (horn), and Timothy Cobb (double bass). That the orchestra dispatched Mr. Wuorinen's challenging piece with such vibrant authority boded well for the future of this new ensemble.



June 11

Ojai Music Festival: eighth blackbird. Libbey Bowl, Ojai, CA. Through June 14. "eighth blackbird took over . . . for four days and packed [The Festival] full with more and more varied music (and music theater) than ever before in the quirky, famous festival's 63-year history. The players, in their early 30s, are musical omnivores, convinced that nearly anything goes and goes together. A non-stop series of concerts, demonstrations, a symposium and a film screening that began last Thursday night and concluded with a five-hour marathon Sunday was not always convincing. But with these blackbirds singing morning, noon and in the dead of night, horizons could not but expand. Formed in 1996 by students at Oberlin College, the blackbirds are examples of a new breed of super-musicians. They perform the bulk of their new music from memory. They have no need of a conductor, no matter how complex the rhythms or balances. They are, as Juilliard Dean Ara Guzelimian said at the festival symposium Friday, 'stage animals,' often in motion, enacting their scores as they play them. They are without stylistic allegiances. Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, experimentalism, New Romanticism, old Expressionism, rock, smooth jazz, not-so-smooth jazz -- all come easily and naturally. They brought to Ojai several of their like-minded, and in some astonishing instances, similarly multi-tasking, multi-talented friends. In addition, resident at Ojai this year were three barrier-breaking artists interesting enough to be subjects of their own festivals. Trimpin is often called a mad genius, because that's a lot easier than describing the way his startling mind works as he assembles toys, junk and what-not into fantastical, joyously interactive sonic installations that sweep the observer/participant into states of sonic wonderment. His Sheng High in Libbey Park translated the images of a martini and other unlikely things into the sounds of an otherworldly underwater organ. The fine, funny new documentary, Trimpin: The Sound of Invention, which was screened Saturday, proved a marvelous mood enhancer. Jeremy Denk -- a young American pianist who also happens to have a background in chemistry and who also happens to be a gifted writer (his blog, Think Denk, is marvelous) with a deep and original musical mind -- was another hero of the festival. If he had done nothing more than rescue Ives's First Piano Sonata . . . which he did in his glorious Saturday morning recital, I would say the weekend would have been worthwhile. The third resident genius was the curious singer, actor Rinde Eckert. He was, along with composer Steven Mackey, the co-creator, and central figure in the centerpiece of the festival, Slide, which received its world premiere on [June 12]. Slide, in many ways, epitomized the kind of new musical world that eighth blackbird is ushering us into. Like most at Ojai this year, Mackey is more than one kind of musician. He is an electric guitarist and his music is influenced by rock and jazz. He is a Princeton music professor, and his music equally includes subtle metric shifts and rhythmic intricacies found in sophisticated contemporary classical music. He doesn't completely manage the merger of raw rock and cooked classicism in Slide, but the stylistic sliding is nonetheless powerful and impressive. Unfortunately, he saddled himself with a sophomoric theatrical concept -- a lonely psychologist who studies how people interpret images seen in and out of focus. This mirrors his own soft-focus life. The show, which

was directed by Eckert, is an elaboration of a series of elliptical songs. At 80 minutes, Slide slipped a lot and will surely have significant refinement as the blackbirds begin to tour it. Mackey wailed away on his guitar and served as effective narrator. Eckert enacted a sad-sack who could boogie. The blackbirds brought their irresistible élan. Mackey was born in 1956, so the blackbirds can't be accused of age discrimination, but I was particularly struck by how many of the major works they chose were written by composers in their 30's. Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire was one, and it was given an elaborate staging Saturday night by choreographer Mark DeChiazza. Five of the blackbirds -- pianist Lisa Kaplan, violinist and violist Matt Albert, cellist Nicholas Photinos, clarinetist Michael J. Maccaferri and flutist Tim Munro -- played from memory while assuming both meaningful and meaningless poses around soprano Lucy Shelton. Percussionist Matthew Duvall, who is given no part by Schoenberg, enacted Pierrot and a dancer, Elyssa Dole, added further extraneous activity. The intense interaction of the players and Shelton turned this performance into a genuinely new way of looking at a 20th century musical icon. But all the rest made it a pointless Pierrot. Ives was an exact contemporary of Schoenberg, and his First Sonata was roughly contemporary with Pierrot. Steve Reich was in his late 30's as well when he wrote his groundbreaking Music For 18 Instruments in 1976. The blackbirds, with a lot of help from their friends, put together a winning performance of the hour-long piece in a couple of rehearsals for our [June 14] morning wake-up call. Pierrot was preceded on [June 13] by a recent work by yet another thirtysomething, David Michael Gordon. His Quasi Sinfonia for 16 musicians goes to town with 19th century musical hymns, which the composer said in his program note suited his evangelical Christianity. Gordon uses a lot of percussion and by the end I felt as though he wanted to smash the hymns down a listener's throat. But his harmonic skill is formidable and, for all his gimmickry, he writes strong, disturbing music. Programming contrasts such as Gordon with Schoenberg were common all weekend. Denk paired Ives' hard-edged sonata, which also uses 19th century hymn tunes, with Bach's celestial Goldberg Variations. Tin Hat, a four-member ensemble, played light jazz before Slide. This new contrasting aesthetic suggests a clicker mentality but without the short attention span. Concentrating hard and long on one thing, then moving on to the next, unrelated thing becomes the new way of paying attention. I was ready to dismiss Tin Hat as pleasant brunch stuff until I heard what these players could do in other contexts. Most impressive was the violinist and soprano Carla Kihlstedt. She is a really good violinist and a really good soprano at the same time, and her solo performance of Lisa Bielawa's haunting Kafka Songs on [June 14] was memorable, and all the more so for her achieving it in a late stage of pregnancy. There were many highlights. Stephen Hartke's Meanwhile had the blackbirds entering into the world of Asian puppet theater. Nathan Davis' Sounder included remote-controlled nutty percussion hanging from a nearby tree, courtesy of Trimpin. QNG, a quartet of four German recorder players, chirped alluringly in music new and ancient. Steve Reich's Double Sextet, winner of this year's Pulitzer Prize in music, was given full-out with 12 players (eighth blackbird performed it last year in Orange County against a recording of itself).

Louis Andriessen's Workers Union -- written in 1975 and another ground-breaking piece by a composer in his 30's -- ended [June 14]'s five-hour marathon with all the festival participants magnificently banging away. John Cage once said, anything goes, but that doesn't mean you can do anything you want. Eighth blackbird does anything it wants, and gets away with it much of the time. I think greatness for this ensemble will come when it learns a little more discrimination and when it works more with top theater artists. Still, blackbirds loosened on Ojai last weekend are unquestionably birds of bright promise" [Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times, 6/15/09].

The New York Philharmonic performs Benjamin Britten's War Requiem. "[I]t came as a surprise when, at a 2008 news conference announcing the current season, [Lorin Maazel] said of Britten's War Requiem, with its pacifist overtones, 'It's a statement that needs to be made. The world is in trouble,' he added. No joke" [James Oestreich, The New York Times, 6/12/09].

June 12

San Francisco Cabaret Opera presents Zak Watkins's No Exit (after Jean-Paul Sartre) and Gian Carlo Menotti's The Old Maid and the Thief. Live Oak Theatre, Berkeley, CA.

June 13

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra presents Restless Dreams. Erling Wold and Fognozzle's In the Stomach of Fleas, Michael Cooke's A Baby Sleeps (a theme-and-variations concerto for guzheng and sheng), Loren Jones's Two Islands, Allan Crossman's Plasticity (featuring Tom Nunn playing his original Sonoglyph), Mark Alburger's King David Suite (The Young and the Restless), Philip Freihofner's Obelisk, Lisa Scola Prosek's Voodoo Storm, and Davide Verotta's Verso L'immenso Feroce. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA. "[The taped part of] Philip Freihofner's Obelisk . . . was a slow, pretty chiming of marimba and vibraphone, maybe, in the parallel fourths that are associated with 'Asian' music. Over that, Adams bleated composed lines that didn't draw from jazz scales but had that kind of verve. A nice brisk start. Lisa Scola Prosek's Voodoo Storm [is a] quartet piece inspired by a late-night dream about skeletons dancing in the yard. The clarinet (Rachel Condry) took the lead, spinning spookily playful lines while the other instruments (piano, cello, trumpet) conjured a slowly gathering storm. I found it upbeat overall but with good hints of malice. . . . For nearly the full ensemble, [Davide Verotta's Verso L'immagine Feroce] meant to give the feeling of continual ascending to a higher state. A good piece with interesting tension throughout. I was especially struck by the two violins -- not just the lines they played, but the fact that two violins can pack that much of a punch by themselves. . . . Allan Crossman[s] Plasticity . . . was the sonoglyph concerto for Tom Nunn. Nunn's parts included direction as to which part of the sonoglyph to play -- it's essentially a palette of metal objects to be struck or scraped with combs -- with the

specifics improvised, although Nunn worked out some ideas in advance. He worked from a score of the full ensemble's parts, so there was more going on than, "Guy jams on sonoglyph randomly." Moreover, the ensemble's parts were written to mesh with the tonalities of the sonoglyph. The concerto included a short duo-cadenza for Nunn and percussionist Anne Szabla. Nunn's back was turned to the audience, but that let us see the sonoglyph, and it put him in eye contact with Szabla for that cadenza. Loren Jones[s] Eagle Bear Woman/Two Islands . . . [was a] surprising change: Two strongly tonal, melodic pieces for the full ensemble, with a soaring beauty you'd associate with film soundtracks. Michael Cooke[s] "A Baby Sleeps" . . . [consisted of] variations on the Taiwanese lullaby by Lu Chuan-sheng. . . . The piece featured Gangqin Zhao on the guzheng . . . and Cooke on the sheng . . . Much of the time, the sheng . . . rode long tones to move the gently lyrical piece. The second half featured a propelling cello riff backed by the ensemble to create some bright harmonies. Mark Alburger's King David Suite [is t]hree pieces taken from the Bible, mostly using David's pre-King days as a theme. Alburger introduced each part with an amusing description of what was going on. These were active pieces with lots of chase-scene dynamics, all conducted with glee by Alburger. Erling Wold and fognozzle[s] In the Stomach of Fleas [was a] lights-and-smoke piece, with fognozzle providing electronics that mostly served as a heavy, abrasive background (he also got a "solo" at one point). It's a piece about the bubonic plague reaching San Francisco around 1900, so it was appropriately disturbing, with the strings tossing and turning in chaotic, shrill ramblings and glissandos. Very cool, especially with the lights off and the lasers dancing on the Old First Church ceiling . . . [with] archways . . . coated in fog, and blue and green lasers. At one particularly dramatic point, the strobelight lit up the whole archway for a stunning effect" [Memory Select, Avante-Jazz Radio, 6/14/09].

June 14

Death of San Francisco Orchestra cellist Lawrence Grainger, shortly after having been diagnosed with cancer. UCSF Hospital, San Francisco, CA. "Among his solo appearances under the Symphony's auspices were his participation in the local premieres of works by Su Lian Tan, Steven Stucky, and Bright Sheng during the 1993 Wet Ink Festival" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 6/19/09].



Free for All. Hilary Hahn and Valentina Lisitsa perform Eugene Ysaÿe's *Reve d'enfant*, and *Sonata for Solo Violin No. 4* and *No. 6*, Bela Bartok's *Romanian Folk Dances*, and Charles Ives's *Sonata No. 1*, *No. 2*, and *No. 4* ("Children's Day at the Camp Meeting"). Town Hall, New York, NY. "Ysaÿe composed his six sonatas as a tribute to Bach, dedicating each to a violinist contemporary, the fourth to Fritz Kreisler and the sixth to Manuel Quiroga. Ms. Hahn's rendition of the fourth sonata was particularly memorable, performed with a fiery, glowing tone and meditative grace. Ms. Lisitsa and Ms. Hahn aptly illuminated the contrasting character and influences of Ives's *Sonata No. 4* . . . with its wistful nature, lively tunes and references to hymns including *At the River*. The two musicians were also an equal partnership in Ives's *Sonata No. 2*, divided into three movements called *Autumn*, *In the Barn*, and *The Revival*. Their playing was particularly vivid and virtuosic in the boisterous second section. A committed, thoughtful rendition of Ives's *Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1* was included on the second half of the program. The program concluded with a colorful performance of Bartok's *Romanian Folk Dances* for violin and piano which, like the . . . Ives pieces, reveals the influence of local musical traditions" [Vivien Schweitzer, *The New York Times*, 6/15/09].

Alarm Will Sound plays Derek Bermel. *Le Poisson Rouge*, New York, NY. "[T]he coolest place to hear contemporary music in New York did little to celebrate its first anniversary on Sunday night. A renovated Bleecker Street club, formerly the Village Gate, it presented a typically adventurous program. Alarm Will Sound, the brilliant 20-member contemporary-music ensemble, conducted by Alan Pierson, played five polystylistic pieces by the audaciously eclectic composer Derek Bermel, who draws from firsthand exposure to indigenous music of West Africa and elsewhere. . . . *Le Poisson Rouge* relies on food and beverages to turn a profit. Its motto: *Serving Art and Alcohol*. . . . But the club routinely attracts listeners curious about any kind of out-there contemporary music" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/16/09].

June 15

Bruce Brubaker plays William Duckworth's *The Time Curve Preludes (Book I)* and Philip Glass's *Etude No. 5* and *Metamorphosis Two*. *Le Poisson Rouge*, New York, NY. "Brubaker . . . played a solo program of subdued works drawn from his new recording, *Time Curve (Arabesque)*. . . . Written in the late 1970's, [the Preludes] subtly combine haunting repetitive patterns with hints of diverse musical idioms, like scat singing, Bartok dances and medieval chant. . . . [T]he preludes require the performer to place narrow metal weights on various keys in the piano's low register. This lifts the dampers on the selected notes, allowing the strings to resonate sympathetically as nearby keys are struck, creating a backdrop of continuous, softly droning sound. Mr. Brubaker concluded his program with sensitive performances of ruminative pieces by Philip Glass . . . When the undulant chord patterns of the final work faded away, a rapt audience let the silence linger, then broke into whoops and cheers. One person shouted,

'Thank you'" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/16/09].

June 17

San Francisco Cabaret Opera presents the premiere of Peter Josheff's *Inferno* (libretto by Jamie Robles). Live Oak Theatre, Berkeley, CA. Through June 21.

June 21

East Coast premiere of Henry Brant's *Orbits* for 80 trombones (89 in this performance), soprano, and organ. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY. "Frank Lloyd Wright might never have anticipated this. But the rotunda of his late masterpiece the Guggenheim Museum — which opened in 1959, six months after his death — is an ideal place to perform . . . *Orbits* . . . [The] 1979 work, [was] conducted by Neely Bruce . . . . There were two performances of Brant's 25-minute piece. The fire code allowed for only 300 listeners to mill on the floor of the rotunda during each one. Brant, who died in 2007 at 94, experimented with unusual sonorities and spatial placement of instruments. He regarded space as the fourth dimension of music, along with pitch, time and timbre. *Orbits* was first performed in 1979 at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco. This primordial, organic piece, by turns brutal and celestial, unfolds in thickly layered clusters and a maze of individual trombone lines. Brant's vision was to have the players surround the audience. That vision was excitingly realized at the Guggenheim. The trombonists were lined up on the walkways that encircle the rotunda, facing in, so that they could see down to Mr. Bruce, who conducted from the path leading up to the lower ring. An enormous rented organ with a row of loudspeakers was placed in a corner of the floor. The soprano Phyllis Bruce sang from on high, though what she sang was not angelic in the conventional sense. Brant came to believe that music written in a single style could not evoke the "stresses, layered insanities and multidirectional assaults of contemporary life on the spirit," as he once wrote. "*Orbits*" is defiantly polystylistic and multilayered. It begins with quiet trombone grumbings, like dinosaurs of our imagination stirring awake. The organ enters with a splattering of pitches in its high register, to contrast with the deep, indistinct sounds of the trombones. As the music gains in intensity, there are captivating antiphonal effects, with ferocious outbursts passed back and forth among groupings of trombones and the organ erupting in a fit of cascading chords, holding its own against the din of brass. But there were also strangely spiritual episodes in this fitful and overpowering piece, as when the trombones played gently rising harmonies built from scores of individual lines while the ethereal soprano sang a wondrous mix of slinky slides and wordless melodic fragments. Lining up . . . trombonists to play this piece could not have been easy . . . . Before the performance, I asked one player whether he knew how many trombonists there were in New York City. He said, wryly: 'About 85, I think. A few more came from other places.' The scene in the rotunda was inspiring.

As the audience entered, there were children in strollers, elderly people with walkers determined not to miss the event and some enterprising folks who brought along compact folding chairs. When the music started most people walked quietly around the space to hear from different vantage points. For once at a museum, people were allowed to take videos and photographs" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/22/09].

June 22

Aki Takahashi. *Le Poisson Rouge*, New York, NY. "She began with Giacinto Scelsi's *Cinque Incantesimi* (1953), a set of assertive, gnarly movements in which short, quietly rumbling bass figures and staccato chord bursts coalesce into surprisingly picturesque miniature dramas. Ms. Takahashi's renderings were muscular at times, and she also brought considerable finger power to Iannis Xenakis's *Herma* (1961), with its rapid, pointillistic lines, dramatic pauses and constant shifts of speed and density. But forcefulness for its own sake has never been a central quality in Ms. Takahashi's arsenal. In the Scelsi and Xenakis, power and virtuosity were carefully modulated: even at their most explosive you got the feeling that reason, rather than out-of-control emotionalism, guided Ms. Takahashi's readings. The rest of the program drew more unequivocally on her greatest strength, a calm, patient introspection that draws an audience into the music: even an audience at a bar, it turned out. You could have heard a pin drop during Morton Feldman's gentle, pianissimo *Palais de Mari* (1986). Quiet as it is, plenty happens in this 23-minute meditation. It is Minimalist in its use of spare textures and stripped-down themes, and maximalist in its harmonies, which embrace dissonance but convey it delicately. At times the spirit of Erik Satie, another of Ms. Takahashi's specialties, seemed to hover over the program, though his music was not included. Parts of the Feldman sounded like a slow-motion *Gymnopédie*. So did Peter Garland's soft-edged *Nostalgia of the Southern Cross* (1976). Only in its final moments did a simple, distant melody intrude on the two undulating chords that provide its Satie-like frame. Ms. Takahashi closed her set by reaching back to Hyper Beatles, a four-CD project from the late 1980s, for which she commissioned 47 composers of all stripes to deconstruct and reconstitute Beatles songs. From that set, she offered Bunita Marcus's *Julia* (1989), a lovely reconfiguration of the John Lennon song, which begins with Ms. Takahashi singing fragments of the lyrics ('seashell eyes,' 'windy smile,' 'ocean child') while moving gracefully through variations on the song's arpeggiated guitar line and elegant melody" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/24/09].

June 25

Death of Michael [Joseph] Jackson (b. 7/29/58, Gary, IN), at 50. UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA. "[h]e was the Peter Pan of pop music: the little boy who refused to grow up. But on the verge of another attempted comeback, he is suddenly gone . . . . Michael Jackson, whose quintessentially American tale of celebrity and excess took him from musical boy wonder to global pop superstar to sad figure haunted by

lawsuits, paparazzi and failed plastic surgery, was pronounced dead . . . at U.C.L.A. Medical Center after arriving in a coma, a city official said. . . . The singer was rushed to the hospital, a six-minute drive from the rented Bel-Air home in which he was living, shortly after noon by paramedics for the Los Angeles Fire Department. A hospital spokesman would not confirm reports of cardiac arrest. . . . At the height of his career, he was indisputably the biggest star in the world; he has sold more than 750 million albums. Radio stations across the country reacted to his death with marathon sessions of his songs. MTV, which grew successful in part as a result of Mr. Jackson's groundbreaking videos, reprised its early days as a music channel by showing his biggest hits. From his days as the youngest brother in the Jackson 5 to his solo career in the 1980s and early 1990s, Mr. Jackson was responsible for a string of hits . . . that exploited his high voice, infectious energy, and ear . . . . As a solo performer, Mr. Jackson ushered in the age of pop as a global product -- not to mention an age of spectacle and pop culture celebrity. He became more character than singer . . . . His entertainment career hit high-water marks with the release of "Thriller," from 1982 . . . But soon afterward, his career started a bizarre disintegration. His darkest moment undoubtedly came in 2003, when he was indicted on child molesting charges. A young cancer patient claimed the singer had befriended him and then groped him at his Neverland estate near Santa Barbara, Calif., but Mr. Jackson was acquitted on all charges. . . . Mr. Jackson was an object of fascination for the news media since the Jackson 5's first hit, *I Want You Back*, in 1969. His public image wavered between that of the musical naif, who wanted only to recapture his youth by riding on roller-coasters and having sleepovers with his friends, to the calculated mogul who carefully constructed his persona around his often-baffling public behavior. Mr. Jackson had been scheduled to perform 50 concerts at the O2 arena in London beginning next month and continuing into 2010. The shows, which quickly sold out, were positioned as a comeback . . . . But there had also been worry and speculation that Mr. Jackson was not physically ready for such an arduous run of concerts, and his postponement of the first of those shows to July 13 from July 8 fueled new rounds of gossip about his health. Nevertheless, he was rehearsing Wednesday night at the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles. 'The primary reason for the concerts wasn't so much that he was wanting to generate money as much as it was that he wanted to perform for his kids,' said J. Randy Taraborrelli, whose biography, *Michael Jackson: The Magic and the Madness*, was first published by Citadel in 1991. 'They had never seen him perform before.' Mr. Jackson's brothers, Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, Marlon and Randy, have all had performing careers, with varying success, since they stopped performing together. (Randy, the youngest, replaced Jermaine when the Jackson 5 left Motown.) His sisters, Rebbie, La Toya and Janet, are also singers, and Janet Jackson has been a major star in her own right for two decades. They all survive him, as do his parents, Joseph and Katherine Jackson, of Las Vegas, and three children: Michael Joseph Jackson Jr., Paris Michael Katherine Jackson, born to Mr. Jackson's second wife, Deborah Jeanne Rowe, and Prince Michael Jackson II, the son of a surrogate mother. Mr. Jackson was also briefly married to Lisa Marie Presley, the daughter of Elvis Presley.

A spokesman for the Los Angeles Police Department said the department assigned its robbery and homicide division to investigate the death, but the spokesman said that was because of Mr. Jackson's celebrity. 'Don't read into anything,' the spokesman told reporters gathered outside the Bel-Air house. He said the coroner had taken possession of the body and would conduct an investigation. At a news conference at the hospital, Jermaine Jackson spoke to reporters about his brother. 'It is believed he suffered cardiac arrest at his home,' he said softly. A personal physician first tried to resuscitate Michael Jackson at his home before paramedics arrived. A team of doctors then tried to resuscitate him for more than an hour, his brother said. 'May Allah be with you always,' Jermaine Jackson concluded, his gaze aloft. . . .

Michael Joseph Jackson was born in Gary on Aug. 29, 1958. The second youngest of six brothers, he began performing professionally with four of them at the age of 5 in a group that their father, Joe, a steelworker, had organized the previous year. In 1968, the group, originally called the Jackson Brothers, was signed by Motown Records. The Jackson 5 was an instant phenomenon. The group's first four singles -- I Want You Back, ABC, The Love You Save, and I'll Be There -- all reached No. 1 on the pop charts in 1970, a feat no group had accomplished before. And young Michael was the center of attention: he handled virtually all the lead vocals, danced with energy and finesse, and displayed a degree of showmanship rare in a performer of any age. In 1971, Mr. Jackson began recording under his own name, while continuing to perform with his brothers. His recording of Ben, the title song from a movie about a boy and his homicidal pet rat, was a No. 1 hit in 1972. The brothers (minus Michael's older brother Jermaine, who was married to the daughter of Berry Gordy, Motown's founder and chief executive) left Motown in 1975 and, rechristened the Jacksons, signed to Epic, a unit of CBS Records. Three years later, Michael made his movie debut as the Scarecrow in the screen version of the hit Broadway musical *The Wiz*. But movie stardom proved not to be his destiny. . . . Jackson's first solo album for Epic, *Off the Wall*, released in 1979, yielded four top ten hits and sold seven million copies, but it was a mere prologue to what came next. His follow-up, *Thriller*, released in 1982, became the best-selling album of all time and helped usher in the music video age. The video for title track, directed by John Landis, was an elaborate horror-movie pastiche that was more of a mini-movie than a promotional clip. Seven of the nine tracks on *Thriller* were released as singles and reached the Top 10. The album spent two years on the Billboard album chart and sold an estimated 100 million copies worldwide. It also won eight Grammy Awards. The choreographer and director Vincent Paterson, who directed Mr. Jackson in several videos, recalled watching him rehearse a dance sequence for four hours in front of a mirror until it felt like second nature. 'That's how he developed the moonwalk, working on it for days if not weeks until it was organic,' he said. 'He took an idea that he had seen some street kids doing and perfected it.' Mr. Jackson's next album, *Bad*, released in 1987, sold eight million copies and produced five No. 1 singles and another state-of-the-art video, this one directed by Martin Scorsese. It was a huge hit by almost anyone else's standards, but an inevitable letdown after *Thriller*. It was at this point that Mr. Jackson's bizarre private life began to overshadow his music.

He would go on to release several more albums and, from time to time, to stage elaborate concert tours. And he would never be too far from the public eye. But it would never again be his music that kept him there. Even with the millions Mr. Jackson earned, his eccentric lifestyle took a severe financial toll. In 1988 Mr. Jackson paid about \$17 million for a 2,600-acre ranch in Los Olivos, Calif., 125 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Calling it Neverland after the mythical island of Peter Pan, he outfitted the property with amusement-park rides, a zoo, and a 50-seat theater, at a cost of \$35 million, according to reports, and the ranch became his sanctum. But Neverland, and Mr. Jackson's lifestyle, were expensive to maintain. A forensic accountant who testified at Mr. Jackson's molesting trial in 2005 said Mr. Jackson's annual budget in 1999 included \$7.5 million for personal expenses and \$5 million to maintain Neverland. By at least the late 1990's, he began to take out huge loans to support himself and pay debts. In 1998, he took out a loan for \$140 million from Bank of America, which two years later was increased to \$200 million. Further loans of hundreds of millions followed. The collateral for the loans was Mr. Jackson's 50 percent share in Sony/ATV Music Publishing, a portfolio of thousands of songs, including rights to 259 songs by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, considered some of the most valuable properties in music. In 1985, Mr. Jackson paid \$47.5 million for ATV, which included the Beatles songs -- a move that estranged him from Mr. McCartney, who had advised him to invest in music rights -- and 10 years later, Mr. Jackson sold 50 percent of his interest to Sony for \$90 million, creating a joint venture, Sony/ATV. Estimates of the catalog's value exceed \$1 billion. Last year, Neverland narrowly escaped foreclosure after Mr. Jackson defaulted on \$24.5 million he owed on the property. A Los Angeles real estate investment company, Colony Capital L.L.C., bought the note, and put the title for the property into a joint venture with Mr. Jackson. In many ways, Mr. Jackson never recovered from the child molesting trial, a lurid affair that attracted media from around the world to watch as Mr. Jackson, wearing a different costume each day, appeared in a small courtroom in Santa Maria, Calif., to listen as a parade of witnesses spun a sometimes-incredible tale. The case ultimately turned on the credibility of Mr. Jackson's accuser, a 15-year-old cancer survivor who said the defendant had gotten him drunk and molested him several times. The boy's younger brother testified that he had seen Mr. Jackson groping his brother on two other occasions. After 14 weeks of such testimony and seven days of deliberations, the jury returned not-guilty verdicts on all 14 counts against Mr. Jackson: four charges of child molesting, one charge of attempted child molesting, one conspiracy charge and eight possible counts of providing alcohol to minors. Conviction could have brought Mr. Jackson 20 years in prison. Instead, he walked away a free man to try to reclaim a career that at the time had already been in decline for years. After his trial, Mr. Jackson largely left the United States for Bahrain, the island nation in the Persian Gulf, where he was the guest of Sheik Abdullah, a son of the ruler of the country, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa. Mr. Jackson would never return to live at his ranch. Instead he remained in Bahrain, Dubai, and Ireland for the next several years, managing his increasingly unstable finances.

June 29

He remained an avid shopper, however, and was spotted at shopping malls in the black robes and veils traditionally worn by Bahraini women. Despite the public relations blow of his trial, Mr. Jackson and his ever-changing retinue of managers, lawyers and advisers never stopped plotting his return. By early this year, Mr. Jackson was living in a \$100,000-a-month mansion in Bel-Air, to be closer to "where all the action is" in the entertainment business, his manager at the time, Tohme Tohme, told *The Los Angeles Times*. He was also preparing for his upcoming London shows. 'He was just so excited about having an opportunity to come back,' said Mr. Paterson, the director and choreographer. . . . A crowd of paparazzi and onlookers lined the street outside Mr. Jackson's home as the ambulance took him to the hospital" [Brooks Barnes, *The New York Times*, 6/26/09].

Johann Johannsson, plus music of Gavin Bryars. *Le Poisson Rouge*, New York, NY. "Johannsson writes music that sits at the border of classical Minimalism and indie pop. His last two recordings -- *IBM 1401: A User's Manual* (2006) and *Fordlandia* (2008) -- were concept albums with a symphonic patina. Each had recurring musical themes as well as overarching narratives about mythology and archaic technology. And each leaned heavily on lush, dark-hued string timbres and simple, slowly cycling themes. Around and within those textures, though, Mr. Johannsson wove electronic bass lines, beats, feedback, buzzing timbres and, occasionally, heavily processed vocals. Mr. Johannsson, who played the piano and oversaw some of the electronic sound, and Matthias Hemstock, who handled electronics and percussion, were joined by the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, better known as ACME . . . The concert was Mr. Johannsson's first in New York, and in ACME he had flexible collaborators who understand (and individually dabble in) the stylistic alchemy that underpins his work. Nearly half the music that Mr. Johannsson offered was drawn from his 2002 debut album, *Englaborn*. . . . The rest of the program touched briefly on Mr. Johannsson's recent evocations of technological dystopias. *The Sun's Gone Dim* and *the Sky's Turned Black*, from *IBM 1401*, sounds as you would expect of a work with that title. Not that any of Mr. Johannsson's music is especially cheerful. . . . The ACME musicians — Caleb Burhans and Keats Dieffenbach, violinists; Nadia Sirota, violist; and Clarice Jensen, cellist — produced a sweet, refined sound with a rich vibrato, both in Mr. Johannsson's music and in its curtain-raising performance of Gavin Bryars's *String Quartet No. 1* ("Between the National and the Bristol"). Mr. Bryars's 24-minute piece, composed for the Arditti Quartet in 1985, begins with a two-note Minimalist seesaw and moves stylistically backward (at least, for a time), toward the sumptuousness of the late-19th and early 20th centuries. . . . [T]his quartet grows increasingly episodic, and takes to swooping from a *Verklärte Nacht*-like ardor to its Philip Glassian opening figure and back" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/26/09].

June 26

Jim Ryan Birthday Bash, with the Left Coast Improv Group. Flux Theater, Oakland, CA.

Music of John Cage. *Le Poisson Rouge*, New York, NY. "At the first, David Broome, a pianist and composer, performed what had been billed originally as John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* (1948) but turned out to be more -- or less, depending on your perspective. Later the violinist Philippe Quint celebrated the release of his new Naxos recording of the Korngold *Violin Concerto* (1945) with a program of showpieces. Cage wanted his *Sonatas and Interludes* to sound different at every performance, and his use of the prepared piano -- with pieces of wood, rubber and metal laid on its strings -- guaranteed unpredictability. As precise as his directions for the placement are, these items are likely to vibrate in different ways on different evenings (and in different pianos) when a key (and therefore a string) is struck. Mr. Broome took the liberty of disassembling Cage's unified set of 16 sonatas and 4 interludes and reassembling it with fresh parts. The interludes were jettisoned entirely and replaced with works written for the purpose by Paul Friedrich Frick, Marc Chan, Kevin Sims and Yoav Pasovsky. Only the last of these was inserted where Cage originally had an interlude; the others were placed neatly after every third sonata. Some of the interludes were inventive, even transfixing, although none bore much relationship to Cage's own, or to the sonatas. And that's a problem, because Cage had definite philosophical and structural ideas about these 20 movements, which he said represented 'the 'permanent emotions' of Indian traditions: the heroic, the erotic, the wondrous, the mirthful, sorrow, fear, anger, the odious and their common tendency toward tranquillity.' He also wrote about the structural relationships among groups of sonatas and the interludes that connect them. In Mr. Broome's accounts of the sonatas, the randomness of Cage's prepared piano was tamed: its light thumps, clicks, rattles and buzzes, along with the piano's normal timbres, were carefully orchestrated and thoroughly controlled. Mostly, Mr. Broome focused on the music's delicacy and produced a light, airy sound that tilted toward the gentler of the 'permanent emotions' Cage mentioned, with only occasional bursts of assertiveness. Of the new interludes the most inviting was Mr. Chan's *Interlude II*, a study in repeating, slowly morphing figures built around chimelike tintinnabulations and ending up in a chromatic Minimalist swirl. Mr. Sims's *Interlude III*, which requires bursts of vocalization and occasional sharp-edged fortissimos, had its moments too. A set of films by Justin Blome accompanied Mr. Broome's performance, which ended with Cage's 4'33". His version was oddly rushed: I clocked it at 4'20". The centerpiece of Mr. Quint's recital was the first movement of the *Korngold Concerto*, a work with a leg and a half in the late 19th century, played here with the sumptuous, singing tone it demands, but with a pianist (Min Kwon) instead of an orchestra . . . [Also on the program was] a fiery *Caprice* from John Corigliano's *Red Violin* [and] . . . works by John Williams and Nino Rota, and *Seduction Blues* by Mr. Quint and Michael Bacon, who accompanied him on the guitar" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/30/09].

Death of Vibe, at 16. "[A]n independent magazine backed by private equity owners succumbed to the punishing ad market and announced it would cease publication immediately. It was, as things go in publishing these days, a fairly routine story. Routine except the magazine had an 800,000 circulation, was founded by the music impresario Quincy Jones and had an alluring name that came to be synonymous with hip-hop and R&B: Vibe. Plenty of magazines have been felled by the punishing economics of print publishing. . . . Founded with a test issue in 1992 by Time Warner and commencing regular issues in 1993, Vibe was a magazine about hip-hop, R&B and urban youth culture that brought luxe design values and major-league photography and writing . . . . In the current context -- a black president, rap stars so ubiquitous even your mom knows who 50 Cent is, pop songs that feature drive-bys from the M.C.'s of the moment -- Vibe would seem less necessary. . . . Born from a friendship between Mr. Jones and Steven J. Ross, then chairman of Time Warner, Vibe showed up on a magazine rack where black faces rarely appeared unless they had been charged with a crime or it was a thin August issue and a fashion magazine wanted to demonstrate some token diversity" [David Carr, The New York Times, 7/1/09].

## Writers

MARK ALBURGER is Editor-Publisher of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, an award-winning ASCAP composer of concert music published by New Music, Music Director of San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra and San Francisco Cabaret Opera, Instructor in Music History and Theory at Diablo Valley College, oboist, pianist, vocalist, recording artist, musicologist, theorist, author, and music critic.

His Sex and the Bible: The Opera, Op. 169, will be premiered in the spring of 2010 as part of the Fresh Voices X programs. Alburger's websites include [markalburger.blogspot.com](http://markalburger.blogspot.com), [markalburger2009.blogspot.com](http://markalburger2009.blogspot.com), [markalburgerevents.blogspot.com](http://markalburgerevents.blogspot.com), [markalburgerworks.blogspot.com](http://markalburgerworks.blogspot.com), [markalburgermusichistory.blogspot.com](http://markalburgermusichistory.blogspot.com)

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

PHILLIP GEORGE is an editor for New Music, and serves on the staff of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

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

HARRIET MARCH PAGE is Artistic Director of San Francisco Cabaret Opera, as well as soprano, librettist, monologist, and Associate Editor of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

