

# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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Volume 9, Number 4

INTERVIEW	Francis Thorne Looks Back and Ahead (At the Same Time) MICHAEL DELLAIRA	1
CONCERT REVIEWS	Que Sorelle Salon, and So Forth GAVIN BORCHERT	5
	Two Visionaries in Two Centuries MARK ALBURGER	6
	Lamentations with White Shoes JANOS GERE BEN	7
	Icebreaker, Icebreaker GAVIN BORCHERT	7
RECORD REVIEWS	Cold Comfort MARK ALBURGER	9
	A Spoolful of Schoenbeck, Baker, and Cameron MARK ALBURGER	10
	The Requiem Challenge JEFF DUNN	10
	Flying Objects MARK ALBURGER	11
	Philip on Film MICHAEL MCDONAGH	12

CALENDAR	For April 2002	13
CHRONICLE	Of February 2002	14
RECORDINGS		17
WRITERS		17

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Francis Thorne

# Francis Thorne Looks Back and Ahead (At the Same Time)

MICHAEL DELLAIRA

Despite receiving a B.A. in music from Yale, Francis Thorne spent a good bit of time as a stockbroker, banker, and jazz pianist before settling on a concert music composer's career at the age of 34. He has written over 100 works for all media while serving as executive director of the American Composers Alliance and Lenox Arts Center, founder and President of the American Composers Orchestra and Thorne Music Fund, and member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He turns 80 on June 23.

I met with Francis Thorne on November 2, 2001, at the offices of the American Composers Orchestra in New York.

DELLAIRA: What will you be doing this year that surprises you – that you wouldn't have thought you'd be doing, say, 20 years ago?

THORNE: Well I think 20 years is the wrong number. Starting 25 years ago my life has been very regular. I work on a piece every summer and I'm here (at the American Composers Orchestra offices) every day the rest of the year. When I sit down to work on a piece I want to work day after day week after week and do nothing else. I can't do that during the year. But one thing is that I don't plan to compose this summer. I feel a little wrung out having done one big work after another. That's entirely different than the last 20 years.

DELLAIRA: You just finished a big work, didn't you?

THORNE: That's right. A big work for the ACO. After all these years – we're in our 25th season -- it was clear that some of the first desk players could be featured, many of whom have been with us since the beginning.

DELLAIRA: A concerto for orchestra?

THORNE: Well, that's what it's called.

DELLAIRA: It is true that you have acquired a justly well-deserved reputation as an administrative leader: now the ACO, before that the Lenox Arts Center, the Naumburg Foundation, the American Composers Alliance. That must take an enormous amount of energy and time. How do you do it?

THORNE: The thing that's been helpful is that I was a businessman.

DELLAIRA: True, you certainly do have a unique story to tell.

THORNE: Peter Mennin called it bizarre.

DELLAIRA: Well it certainly isn't a typical composer's story. I've known composers who left music for Wall Street, but not the other way around as you did. Can we get into that a bit? The truth is you did grow up in a musical family.

THORNE: Well yes, in a way. My Dad was a gifted amateur pianist and played ragtime by ear. He couldn't read a note. And my grandfather was Gustav Kobbe. Kobbe's opera book has been on the market for about 80 years; a new edition has just come out.

DELLAIRA: I just saw it at Coliseum Books before coming here.

THORNE: We lived in New York a lot and my aunt, Kobbe's eldest daughter, took me to all kinds of things: we went to the Philharmonic, we went to Broadway shows. Between the ages of 8 and 20, I went

to the opera dozens of times and heard nothing but Wagner. Grandpa Kobbe had actually known Wagner. He'd been sent over as a young reporter to write about him. And because of his close relationship with the music of Wagner he decided that Wagner was the greatest composer of everyone, and that was passed on to me. Verdi, Puccini, Gounod -- they were all second-rate. And so during those 12 years I never heard anything but Wagner. That was a strong influence but a rather biased one. That and the jazz through my Dad were things that just went through my early life and which I think are discernible still.

DELLAIRA: But you didn't grow up studying music seriously.

THORNE: No, when I went off to Yale I was going to major in English Literature, but going into my junior year I heard Hindemith was coming and I switched my major to music theory and composition. I was the only undergraduate music major – the others were grad students. But the war was on and they graduated us six months early so I never really got too much composition. Although I did get a lot of counterpoint and harmony from Hindemith.

DELLAIRA: So then you went into the Navy?

THORNE: Yes, I was in World War II for three years, and when I got out I was already married with two kids, and I had to start making some money to support my family.

DELLAIRA: Is that when you went into your father's brokerage?

THORNE: Not exactly. My dad had a seat on the NY Stock Exchange and he was very anxious for me to join him in his business, so I did what he suggested. I went out and got a job working in a bank – Banker's Trust -- to get some experience on the financial front. This was in 1945. I worked there for several years and just as I was about to join his firm, he was dying, and we decided that his firm would be absorbed by a larger firm – which it was – and I went to work for that larger firm. Harris Upham, the third largest firm in the country. I worked there for another four years.

DELLAIRA: Were you composing too, like Charles Ives, on his way back and forth from the office?

THORNE: No, not at all. I was commuting in from Bay Shore, Long Island, but wasn't doing any composing.

DELLAIRA: When did the magical career transformation take place?

THORNE: I met a distinguished piano teacher named Claude Gonvierre and he said, "I'd like to give you lessons." After a while he said, "You know you really could be on the concert stage."

DELLAIRA: You were going to pursue a career as a concert pianist?

THORNE: Yes, but after a year he had me give a couple of recitals -- one at a private school, the other at a private home -- and I was so nervous performing, I thought of going back into business at the same firm I had left. In August of '55, Louis Lorillard, with whom I went to prep school and who inherited a lot of money (tobacco, I think), started the Newport Jazz Festival at the urging of his jazz-fan wife. This was the year at the end of the second Festival, I think, and he called me up and said "I'm sitting with Ellington and he has written a show – *The Man with Four Sides* -- and needs to hold some auditions." Ellington needed two pianos and Louis knew I had two

pianos in the apartment and so they came over and did the audition, and I did what you would have done: I offered drinks at the end. And suddenly there was a great party going. And during the course of the evening Billy Strayhorn left the bench for some reason or other and I found myself playing with Ellington. Two days later Louis Lorillard called me up and said "Ellington really liked the way you played and there's this wonderful job opening up and it's yours on his recommendation. You don't have to audition or anything." It was at the Hickory House, a well-known jazz club. I took it and played there for two seasons alternating at various times with the Marian McPartland Trio, Billy Taylor, or Ralph Sutton. For a while I had a bass player, but mostly it was solo piano. During the course of that second year I decided that I really wanted to get into composition.

DELLAIRA: It's interesting that you felt perfectly comfortable performing on piano in this environment...

THORNE: Well, I was playing jazz, I was improvising. Playing memorized music is what got me all uptight.

DELLAIRA: Did you sing?

THORNE: No, I never sang there.

DELLAIRA: After Hickory House you wanted to do something...

THORNE: Something more serious. I thought that I'd like to pick up where I left off with Hindemith, which was really not that far. So a friend who was married to a Florentine told me that I should go to Florence and study with Luigi Dallapiccola, that he was a wonderful teacher. I had heard a little of his music, so that's what we decided to do. It took a while, because I had Ann and three kids.

DELLAIRA: It must have been a major change in their lives too.

THORNE: Ann was very interested in doing this once we decided we were going to go to Florence.

DELLAIRA: How did the rest of your family feel about you leaving the financial world of your father to run off to Italy to be a composer? They must have thought you were a bit eccentric.

THORNE: They did except for one. I had a first cousin, who also started at Banker's Trust like I did and he left to get into world politics. We used to consider ourselves very sympathetic black sheep in the family. And my mother was totally confused by my playing in a jazz club and going off to Europe. But Ann was terrific. She backed me up all the way. I don't think I would have done it on my own. Ann really had the guts and the gumption to say, "let's do it."

DELLAIRA: So you off and went to Florence.

THORNE: Yes. When we got to Florence and rented a villa and put the kids in school I discovered that Luigi Dallapiccola had gone to New York to teach at Queens College! It was September and so we decided to stay in Florence through Christmas, admire the art, and take some trips and so forth. Then about six weeks later, in late October, I met David Diamond at a cocktail party and he asked me to come over to his apartment the next day to talk about possibly studying with him. And when I got there the first thing he said was "go over to the piano and play me some Ellington." And I said "how do you know I play Ellington?" and he said "well Sam Barber used to come in and hear you at the Hickory House and told me that he loved the way you played." So after I finished playing Satin Doll he said, "O.K., if you work with me that's where we start. We never deny your jazz background."

DELLAIRA: You had weekly lessons?

THORNE: Twice weekly, with David for two and a half years.

DELLAIRA: What was your first composition?

THORNE: A duo for violin and viola, which was definitely a student work. It was performed once, in Florence.

DELLAIRA: Did you ever study with or get to meet Dallapiccola?

THORNE: I got to know Dallapiccola later because he used to come back to Florence every summer. A lot of people thought he was terrific, like Henry Weinberg, but not me. I realized I could never have studied with him. He was humorless and self-absorbed and not at all interested in my jazz background.

DELLAIRA: I vaguely know, I think, that you left Florence to come back to New York because you had a big performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra?

THORNE That's right. A very early work of mine, *Jazz Suite* for two pianos, was performed in the courtyard of the Pitti Palace and in the audience was the director of the American Academy in Rome, Lawrence Roberts and his wife Isabel. They had with them a very nice gentleman and we invited them all back to the apartment for a drink after the concert. The gentleman turned out to be Max deSchauensee, the principal critic of the Philadelphia Bulletin. And he said to me, "when you have an orchestra piece that you and David feel is worthy, I'll look at it, and if I like it I'll personally recommend it to Eugene Ormandy." So I thought that was very nice, and kind of forgot about it. A couple of years later I was back in New York briefly to see my mother and I bumped into Max at the Metropolitan Opera at a matinee, and he said "what about that orchestra piece?" and I said, "as a matter of fact I've just finished one which may qualify and I'll send it right off to you." It was my *Elegy for Orchestra*. And within two weeks of sending it to Max I had a letter from Ormandy saying that he had programmed it in November of 1964 for three performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra. We felt it was time to come home.

DELLAIRA: Then it wasn't just a matter of coming back for the performance? You decided it would be a career move?

THORNE: Yes, we thought there might possibly be a career. The most successful period I've ever had in my life as a composer was right after that. But the longer I stayed in New York the more I realized that to get your music played by the small ensembles you had to be writing in a twelve-tone, atonal kind of style. And I was sort of slipping into that and began to realize that that wasn't the real me at all. So we went back to Florence to spend what turned out to be another three years. And when I got there I was looking at a blank page for several weeks getting nowhere and I finally decided I was going to read Dante to help get my Italian back. And I was so taken with the final 39 lines of Dante's *Paradiso* that I set them to music for soprano and orchestra. Once I had the text in mind – and I set it by the way in Italian – the music flowed very easily in a tonal, long-lined way, and I felt I was very much back on track.

DELLAIRA: You must be referring to *La Luce Eterna* which, if I'm not mistaken, is the title track of your new CD.

THORNE: Yes. Ned Rorem believes that Americans should set all their texts in English, but I can't imagine setting that beautiful, beautiful Italian in English. I think he's off base on that one! The Italian really brought back the long line.

DELLAIRA: Yes, I associate your music with long lines. Not to get too far off track, there's a new piece on that CD, *Rhapsodic Variations* which is rather chordal. Is this a departure for you?

THORNE: The fast parts have more jazz; there are some lines there.

DELLAIRA: I know you've said you regard your music as highly chromatic, yet tonal, and very much influenced by late Wagner.

THORNE: Yes!

DELLAIRA: And jazz. That's quite an interesting combination.

THORNE: I guess it is. Jazz up that Wagner.

DELLAIRA: The influence of jazz on your music. Other composers come to mind who have claimed the same influence, like Gunther Schuller and Donald Martino.

THORNE: ... and Copland.

DELLAIRA: Yes, but Copland never played jazz. I'd like to ask not so much where does one find jazz in your music, but more when you're composing, where does jazz fit into the equation?

THORNE: I think it's very clear. Take for example the piano concerto I wrote for Ursula Oppens. The third movement of that has a deliberately be-boppish feeling, and she gets it and feels it. Even though my piano playing didn't get too boppish when I was playing in the 50s, I was fascinated by Gillespie and that's probably when – jazz chords, I guess you could say – were influential on my music. Those be-bop lines also appear – one of the best examples is the last movement of the piano concerto. As far as the sleazy Wagnerian chromaticism, I just adored that music so much as a kid and I can't help but think that has to influence me.

DELLAIRA: Yes, and if I can make this statement, I think it was that influence that pointed you in the direction of writing large orchestral pieces. There's really a more Wagnerian bent unlike, say, Gershwin, who tries to write more explicit jazz.

THORNE: I've written some pop tunes, but no explicit jazz.

DELLAIRA: You're referring, I take it, to "Chewing Gum," the hit tune you wrote back when you were living in Florence?

THORNE: Yes, it was one big hit but not a very good piece. Good enough to have three different recordings in Italy back in '59. Unfortunately I didn't belong back then to any royalty-collecting organization – it was before I joined ASCAP – and so I never really made any money out of it.

DELLAIRA: But you're now a BMI composer.

THORNE: Yes, I started in ASCAP, because of those pop tunes. After I came back to New York and the Ormandy experience, I was being played by other orchestras, and they were only paying me 200 bucks. So Felix Greissle, Schoenberg's son-in-law, who was my editor and publisher at E.B. Marks introduced me to Oliver Daniel at BMI who said "I'll multiply that by 10."

DELLAIRA: So you were saying that you went back to Italy to get back to tonality and the long line. How long did you stay?

THORNE: We came back to New York to settle in 1971.

DELLAIRA: Is that when your association with the American Composers Alliance began?

THORNE: Almost. From 1970-72 I worked at the Naumburg Foundation. Then from '72-'74 I worked with Lyn Austin at the Lenox Arts Center. The Naumburg thing came up because Schuyler Chapin, who I'd known for a long time, thought I would be a very good president of the Mannes College of Music and he proposed me as chairman of their search committee and the board turned me down because they said I hadn't had enough experience. So Schuyler got me the job at the Naumburg Foundation. Lyn snagged me away from the Naumburg by offering me more money and by giving me the chance to organize an ensemble for the Lenox Arts Center, not only to play in their music theater productions but also to give concerts. In that first year I had Harvey Sollberger on flute, Charles Wuorinen on piano, Fred Sherry on cello and Joe Passaro, just out of the Manhattan School, was up there on percussion. A terrific group.

DELLAIRA: Where did ACA fit in?

THORNE: I was chatting with Charles Dodge at a cocktail party and he said to me "Why don't you belong to ACA?" and I said "Well, I don't have any particular reason to." To which he said "Well you really ought to come out of that ivory tower and associate yourself with your colleagues." So I said O.K. At the time I was looking for a job. I was offered a job with the National Orchestral Association. I asked Charles if he would recommend me for the job at ACA. But when he proposed me to the ACA Board they turned me down on the basis that a composer shouldn't be in that position because it would be so easy to exploit it to the composer's own benefit. We went through this routine twice at which point Joan Tower got up in arms. So she and Charles arranged to have a lunch with the three principal nay-sayers. They grilled me for about two hours and finally came around. They had a board meeting at which I was elected Executive Director of ACA and went to work on September 15, 1975.

DELLAIRA: What about the origins of the American Composers Orchestra which originally started as part of ACA.

THORNE: The point is when I came to work for ACA the first thing Charles, then president, said was "we have to celebrate the 40th anniversary" of ACA. I thought to myself that I could raise enough money for an orchestral concert. Just to digress, I owe Charles, who is young enough to be my son, for a good piece of advice about ACO. He said "if you want to keep this thing going, do *everything* yourself." And that was really good advice from a young person.

DELLAIRA: Meaning?

THORNE: Meaning I was President, I was Treasurer, I did the programming, because Dennis was never here, someone had to do the programming. I had to hire the guest conductors, the soloists, everything. That's the way things get started. I did get some help from Oliver Daniel at BMI. The Riegger was pretty serious, he said, and we should have something a lot of fun to offset it and he suggested the Harrison.

DELLAIRA: The first concert took place when?

THORNE: February 7, 1977, a year and a half after I went to work for ACA. The only person I knew who was into computers was Charles, so we commissioned *Palinode* from Charles, Lou Harrison's *Marriage at the Eiffel Tower* -- by then I knew Virgil Thomson quite well, and he agreed to be a narrator along with Lou, which was just delightful. And we had a piece by Yehudi Wyner. Then there was intermission, then the Riegger *Symphony No. 3*. Harold Schonberg gave us quite a good review and said it was the first time he ever enjoyed a Riegger performance. The great review was in *The Village Voice* [points up to the wall], which is by Tom Johnson, a fabulous, rave review. It was clear that to let this thing just die was not the way to go.

DELLAIRA: It was too difficult to do the things required to keep an orchestra going and continue to be the Executive Director at ACA?

THORNE: Yes, except that I continued to do it for ten years. I didn't leave ACA until 1985. It was a gradual thing. ACA became an easier thing to deal with once we got some programs in place, and the ACO became more of a challenge and needed more work.

DELLAIRA: When did the ACO officially become a distinct entity?

THORNE: The first year, which was 76-77, we were called the American Composers Concerts Inc., and we did the February concert in Tully Hall with 50 players and then we did three chamber concerts at the American Place Theater in which we employed a stage director, used lighting and motion and stuff – that didn't turn out to be very interesting so we dropped that right away and I was able to raise enough money to put on three orchestral concerts in Tully Hall the following season. We actually made a little money that year.

DELLAIRA: And Dennis Russell Davies as conductor?

THORNE: I went down to Bradley's (a jazz club) to hear Hall Overton who was a jazz pianist I admired very much. Well I arrived at Bradley's and Hall came over and said "could you play my next set?" He had an emergency at home he had to take care of. I was playing a solo set and vaguely noticed that someone had pulled up a chair and was sitting very near to me. When I finished, I turned to this person and it was Dennis. Nothing happened for a couple of years and then he went to the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and he called me up one day and said "did you hear that Hall died?" and I said no I hadn't and he said "I want you to write a piece in his memory" and that began an association with Dennis which continues to this day.

DELLAIRA: Of course the ACO isn't the only thing you do. And I wanted to ask you: does being on the boards of the Naumburg and the Virgil Thomson Foundation ever create a conflict for you? Do you find it difficult to be objective about other's work, some of whom may not even be that friendly to your own?

THORNE: I think quite honestly I've been pretty open-minded. My policy with the ACO has always been "the infinite variety of American music." I hope I've been able to do that. For example I'm not the world's greatest fan of pure minimalism, but once in a while you hear a pretty good piece.

DELLAIRA: So if you're not planning any pieces for your and Ann's 80th years, what are you going to do?

THORNE: We've talked about taking a Baltic cruise, we've talked about driving around and seeing people one-on-one that we're fond of. We have kids and grandchildren scattered around. It's all up for grabs at the moment.

DELLAIRA: Don't you have a performance with the New York Chamber Symphony coming up this year?

THORNE: Well yes. Gerry Schwarz, when I met him, was playing first trumpet in the American Brass Quintet, and I don't think he liked the piece I wrote for them in the early 70's. So he never showed much interest in my music until David Diamond heard *Piano Concerto No. 3* with Ursula Oppens, and flipped over it, and insisted the next time he saw Gerry that they sit down and listen to it together. And Gerry called me up right after he heard it to say they programmed *Elegy* with Seattle, then commissioned the *Clarinet Concerto*, and he's going to premiere my *Oboe Concerto*, so that's been a wonderful new relationship. The memorandum I got from him went this way: if the NY Chamber Symphony is in business in

'02 or '03 I will do it on my one concert, and then I'll do it in Liverpool. If there's no NY Chamber Symphony, then I'll premiere it in Liverpool. So it's going to be done, one way or the other. I was originally supposed to write it for our 25th anniversary here, and I had a short score finished, then Dennis said he'd like me to write a *Concerto for Orchestra*, so this little piece was an orphan for quite a while. It will be premiered in Seattle in January of '03.

DELLAIRA: What would you regard as the single most important musical event for you?

THORNE: Oh it's awfully hard to beat the Ormandy performance. To hear that music played so beautifully was really thrilling. Getting hooked up with Dennis, that too, though that's a little more abstract.

DELLAIRA: If your friend Louis Lorillard hadn't called you ...

THORNE: I would have been back in business. I'm sure I would have served on some boards and done some public service that way.

DELLAIRA: It must be gratifying to have Ellington as the lynchpin.

THORNE: Ellington became a pretty good friend. Ann and I, whenever we had a chance, would go and hear him. And as soon as he spotted her he would tell the audience she was there and dedicate the next piece to her. And sometimes when he was on tour he would pick up the phone and call and ask how things were going.

DELLAIRA: What did he think of your concert music?

THORNE: He heard *Fortuna* when it was produced in New York off-Broadway and he liked it, though he said it was ruined by the direction, but he liked the music very much. It was wonderful to see him there on that opening night.

DELLAIRA: That's the show you did with Arnold Weinstein?

THORNE: Yes. In 1961. It was fun working with Arnold. But my work, except for my opera *Mario and the Magician*, has been pretty much locked into concert music. And I'm loving it.

DELLAIRA: Any mistakes that you've made that you can help the rest of us to avoid? Anything you would do differently?

THORNE: I think I've always been much better at promoting other people's work than my own. I'm lazy at promoting my own work.

DELLAIRA: It's not that you're lazy, you're shy.

THORNE: I am basically a shy person. My instinct is to cross the street when someone is coming. Or to go to a party and leave. I do that a lot. I don't like big parties.

DELLAIRA: Consistent with your attempt to be a concert pianist!

THORNE: I like doing cabaret, though! Maybe because it comes naturally.

DELLAIRA: Lastly, let me ask and I don't know if it's possible to even answer: what are your thoughts and feelings about the state of music today?

THORNE: I can answer that very easily, and it may surprise you to know that I think we're in a golden age. Someday we're going to look back on this and think "there was an awful lot of good stuff going on." I'm sure there are a lot of people who would disagree with me, but I hear a lot of good stuff these days, and it's all different. And I think it's just wonderful.



# Concert Reviews

## Que Sorelle Salon, and So Forth

### GAVIN BORCHERT

Sorelle. January 19, Brechemin Auditorium, University of Washington School of Music, Seattle, WA.

*Seattle Composers Salon*. January 25. Soundbridge, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA.

Quake. January 28. Benaroya Recital Hall, Seattle, WA.

Odeon String Quartet. January 30. PONCHO Recital Hall, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, WA.

January was, quite by accident, an exciting and heartening month for new music in Seattle: two ensembles debuted, another initiated an academic residency, and the three-year-old Seattle Composers Salon took a big leap forward.

Sorelle (Italian for “sisters”) was formed around the members’ shared love of a particular work, Ravel’s *Chansons madecasses*. Flutist Sarah Bassingthwaighte, pianist Julie Ives, cellist Anne Robison, and soprano Hope Wechkin, seeking a venue to perform it, staged their own concert and commissioned two accompanying works for their quartet, requesting that both works, like the Ravel, touch on folk music or poetry in some way. Bern Herbolsheimer’s gently sensual *Albina* set five rubai, a haiku-like traditional two-line Tatar verse form. Tom Baker went further afield even than Turkey in his *Six Songs from the Red Planet*, imagined folk tunes from various regions of Mars. The songs’ “Martian” texts are invented nonsense syllables, but nevertheless emotionally evocative and chosen with a skilled ear.

The texts for Ravel’s *Chansons madecasses* were similarly invented; in 1787 one Evariste-Desire de Parny published a collection of poems that purported to be translations of authentic Madagascar verse, but which seem to have been his own pastiche on traditional models. Sorelle captured beautifully both the poems’ heady eroticism (sample line: “Let your steps mime the poses of pleasure and the surrender to voluptuous bliss”) and the anger in the surprisingly political, anti-imperialist second poem (“Do not trust the white man!”). For future programs, Sorelle plans to continue to combine 20th-century classics and commissioned works.

The septet Quake plans a similar future as a mostly-but-not entirely new music ensemble. Named after the seismic shock that shook Seattle, and interrupted their first rehearsal, on February 28, 2001, their instrumentation is Pierrot-plus. Music for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano is pretty common; pieces adding percussion to this quintet are also common; pieces for these six plus trombone are non-existent (the musicians were Sue Telford, Sean Osborn, Ella and Walter Gray, Meade Crane, Rob Tucker, and Don Immel). So Quake, too, commissioned two works for their debut concert.

Quake wanted another bass voice, and specifically sought Immel’s jazz and improv experience, hence the unusual lineup. They’ll primarily perform works for smaller sub-groups, but naturally wanted to play all together on their debut. Stuart Dempster is Seattle’s eminence grise in the world of improv. A frequent collaborator with Pauline Oliveros, he’s known for his recordings in an underground water cistern with a 45-second reverb time, and incidentally was the trombonist on the classic 1969 Columbia recording of Riley’s *In C*. He was asked for a concert-opener, and came up with ‘*Ear th*’ *Quake*, in which the players improvise jittery fragments on the Morse-code rhythms of the letters in the word “earthquake.” Six of the players did this as they entered the recital hall; the fragments shifting and bouncing everywhere over a throbbing bass-drum roll from Tucker did charmingly recall the chaotic feel of the 2001 quake itself.

The other commissioned work, John Muehleisen’s *Quake*, was cast in three movements, “Komoidia,” “Tragoidia,” and “Elegeion.” It started out splashy and turbulent, giving everyone a good chance to show off, and ended dourly with a slow passacaglia over a trudging twelve-tone row. Chinary Ung’s *Grand Alap* for cello and percussion -- lots of it -- was a dazzling, if completely directionless, compendium of Eastern-flavored sound effects. Jennifer Higdon’s *wissahickon poeTrees* evoked the four seasons as seen in a Philadelphia park with warm Barberish harmonies and delicately pretty sounds (for example, everyone played wineglasses, rim-rubbed or tapped with knitting needles, in the piece’s closing moments).

Salvatore Sciarrino’s daring and compelling *Trio No. 2* (violin, cello, piano) was for me the hit of the evening; all about texture, it was built mostly out of upper-register long tones from the strings, colored by artificial harmonics and ponticello effects, timbres both harsh and ethereal. The piano would occasionally interrupt with a stark gesture--a gonglike cluster here, a slashing glissando there.

The Odeon Quartet has been together since 1999, but just began a connection with Cornish College of the Arts, a private conservatory whose reputation as a hotbed of musical liberalism goes back to John Cage’s days as the staff dance accompanist (he wrote his first prepared-piano works here, and rumor has it that that very piano still resides somewhere in the bowels of the building). The Odeon put together a fantastic program, combining two classics -- Shostakovich’s *Quartet No. 8* and Part’s *Fratres* -- with Cowell, Partch, and Glass. Partch’s *Two Studies on Ancient Scales* were beautiful exotica -- flute-like microtonal melodies on first violin accompanied by feather-light strummed pizzicatos from the others. Cowell’s 1938 *Quartet No. 4 (United)* included a lot of percussive, non-traditional playing techniques (strings tapped with pencil erasers); with its rhythmic grooves and world-musicky feel, it sounded like it had been written last week. Glass’s *Quartet No. 5* offered rich pillows of sound, driving virtuoso passages, and a slightly Impressionist harmonic flavor (similar to his Frenchified score for *La Belle et la Bete*).

*Fratres* was as serene and ascetic as anyone could wish. This and the *Quartet No. 8* showed the ensemble’s command of color: amazingly glassy drones, sounding just like a bowed psaltery, in the Part, contrasted with the visceral crunch of the “knocking-at-the-door” chords in the finale of the Shostakovich.

The Seattle Composers' Salon is a new-music open-mike night organized by Tom Baker, a concert on the last Friday of every other month featuring whatever music local composers want to present -- you recruit and rehearse your own musicians, and contact Baker to claim a spot on the lineup. Salons had been held at a North Seattle church -- a comfortable location, but out-of-the-way. But for this latest installment, Baker had secured the use of Soundbridge, the Seattle Symphony's multimedia education center in one corner of Benaroya Hall, their downtown home. Soundbridge includes a lovely little 80-seat recital room, just a wooden box with a raised dais at one end.

The move was a stunning success: 140 people showed up to an event that had never gotten an audience larger than 50. The recital room's side doors were thrown open, and the overflow stood among the Soundbridge exhibits, the listening stations and computer terminals and the like. Everyone could hear, if not see.

Baker is adamant about not instituting any sort of selection process, thus avoiding the attendant risk of a party line creeping in, no matter how noble the intentions of the programming committee. If you have a piece to share, you're on. And the system works: this Salon, as they all have, covered a huge stylistic range. Melodie Linhart opened the evening with a short suite, complex but crystalline in texture, written for ud virtuoso Munir Nurettin Bekin. Amy Denio accompanied herself in her *Inner Music*, a pair of songs brilliantly exploring sonority -- sum and difference tones -- via the combination of her plangent voice and crack accordion playing. Minor-key tunes and off-kilter ostinati often add a taste of Weill to her music.

This Salon marked 17-year-old Michael Chealander's first public performance; his *Etude No. 1 for Piano* is a one-page two-part invention overtly modeled on Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* (admitting one's influences I think is the most courageous and honest thing a beginning composer can do). Dry and wry, full of crisscrossing fives and sevens, it made a great first impression. Justin Melland's compelling and extravagant *String Quartet No. 1* came straight out of European high modernism c. 1965, all ethereal sound-clouds, angular fragments, and extended techniques. Joshua Kohl (one of the leaders of Seattle's guerrilla-music-theater troupe Degenerate Art Ensemble) offered *Ode Tounami*, a gorgeous guitar solo (played by Michael Nicoletta) drawing on the idiom of the African gourd harp.

*Tehran Glitter*, by Josh Feit, closed the show. It brought together four elements: a violinist playing long lines of a very faint Middle Eastern perfume; the composer playing drones on a fourth or fifth on a lap-held electronic keyboard; a large-voiced baritone singing Bernie Taupin's lyrics for "Bennie and the Jets" to a slow chantlike tune, wandering up and down through only two or three notes; and a tape loop taken from a radio broadcast of an Iranian student's protest speech during the Carter-administration hostage crisis. Yes, it sounds ludicrous, and I'm still trying to figure out how Feit made it work. It was riveting -- not at all campy or parodistic, nor, on the other hand, did it seem self-importantly messagey. These two echt-70's events, the Iranian crisis and glam rock, were simply juxtaposed, making a weird sort of sonic newsreel of the period. Feit admitted he'd conceived of the piece pre-September 11, which did save the piece from seeming either exploitative, tasteless, or agitpropish.

Also on the program -- full disclosure -- were three brief piano pieces of my own, with the mouthwatering titles *Prelude*, *Prelude*, and *Chorale*. I played them myself -- effectively, I suppose, though I wasn't entirely happy with my pedaling, which could have been cleaner.

## Two Visionaries in Two Centuries

### MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony in Charles Ives's *Symphony No. 4*. February 1, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

*Two Visionaries in Two Centuries* could have been the theme for the San Francisco Symphony's subscription series that opened on January 31, and it was to die for -- almost too much.

Michael Tilson Thomas opened with two by 19th-century iconoclast Hector Berlioz -- his very polished and sparkly *Roman Carnival Overture* and music from his equally over-the-top but rambly *Romeo and Juliet*. The former was downright burnished with fiery contributions from brass and percussion, and a soulful solo from English hornist Julie Ann Giacobassi.

If Berlioz was the king of spectacle in his day, surely Charles Ives would have been the same in his, if he had been better known in the early 20th century. As it was, the organist / composer / insurance executive's *Symphony No. 4* was not performed in its entirety until 1965 -- 11 years after its creator's death in 1959. Ives has been compared to the transcendentalists, impressionists, and avant-gardists, but surely he is as well a musical Whitman and a rustic American Mahler: if not "I am the universe resounding," definitely "I hear (and am) America and the universe resoundingly singing." And sing it did and does, in this piece, right from the opening movement when the San Francisco Symphony Chorus chimed in with one of the hymn tunes associated with the words "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night." Ives sets this over a bed of orchestral murmurs and growls. Recapitulating a notion which Thomas has previously employed, the conductor had the Chorus sing no less than six beautiful old hymn tunes, which are among the numerous quotations utilized in the work. This allowed the far-away intonings of a small group of upper strings and harp (situated adjacent to the chorus on the above stage balcony) to be heard crystal clearly in their liturgical/symbolic context. If tempos here and in the third movement were on the brisk side, Thomas was evidently emphasizing the urgent over the earnest.

No quibble on tempos in the second movement, which is shot out of a cannon on the Fourth of July, and contains shrapnel from folk music, ragtime dances, patriotic tunes, classical potboilers, and religious rites. It's a glorious jumble that required assistant conductor Edwin Outwater to jump up (on cue) out of the orchestra and proceed to conduct some players who (as intended) galloped wildly to the tune of a decidedly Thoreauianly different drummer.

Meanwhile ponytailed solo pianist Christopher Oldfather hammered away, replacing indisposed ponytailed Robin Sutherland (must have something to do with the dress code). While Oldfather's virtuosic contributions were welcome, the placement of this keyboardist to the fore (which may be required, given that the part is marked "solo piano") did at times call unnecessary attention to musics that were often subordinate -- covering up prominent group clarinet boogie at one point, for instance. And, incredibly, even the trumpets were covered at one point, not quite squeaking out their "Yankee Doodle" audibly enough against the challenges of mass percussion. But, as Ives would have said, "Wonderful! It was every man for himself!" (the notion of gender inclusive language had not been pro-offered yet, so he meant well). And yes, the joke-fizzle that ended the movement seemed to honor the composer's intentions. Ives intended no slow-down or fermata at this point, despite what the influential Stokowski recording may have suggested.

The third movement was relatively brisk, yet dignified. The fourth was... well... transcendent, beginning with subterranean percussion (or at least subfloor -- as the sounds emerged from under the stage) and climaxing with the glorious wordless chorus. Yes, Debussy and Ives and Holst do this too, and Ives is among noble company. And this was a memorable and noble night at the Symphony.

## Lamentations and White Shoes

### JANOS GEREBEN

Chanticleer in John Tavener's *Lamentations and Praises*. February 2, Stanford University, CA.

Wearing white shoes *so* long after Labor Day was John Tavener's only faux pas on February 2 at Stanford University. Otherwise, the jam-packed Memorial Church revelled in the magnificent Chanticleer's world premiere of his *Lamentations and Praises*.

This is an important and impressive new work in the theatrical-ecclesiastic category, on par with Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and the Bernstein *Mass*. It is also possibly Tavener's best work.

*Lamentations* is a 70-minute Passion-Mass-Good Friday service, written for the Chanticleer's 12 singers, organ, and a chamber orchestra of eight, conducted by Joseph Jennings. (It's on its way to two co-commissioners: the Handel & Haydn Society of Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of New York.)

Tavener spoke briefly before the performance about his Russian Orthodox faith, quoting Blake -- "everything that lives is holy" -- and emphasizing the overwhelming importance of love in religion.

The music is extraordinary. It combines microtonal vocal passages; what strongly resemble (but are not) Gregorian chants and plainsongs; soprano figures soaring over a massive bass cathedral of sound; eminently tonal structure bent (but not broken) by the proximity of dissonance, atonality, often a sound neither "Western" nor "Asian"; something reminiscent of Kitka's Balkan repertory. Out of it all emerges not some fashionable chop suey, but a singular, unique, memorable work of integrity and character.

The performance was near-miraculous, even for the Chanticleer. With one alto out sick, the group still filled the cavernous space as if it were the Mormon Tabernacle Chorus. One keeps looking around in vain for some offstage chorus enhancing the sound or amplification or some plausible explanation for these few individual voices to be woven together so grandly, so beautifully - and without pushing or trying to substitute volume for projection.

The vocal performances are rich in such thrilling, operatic arcs as urgent cries of "Rise!" resolving into a serene "Risen." Arias, recitatives, duets blend into one another with Wagnerian disdain for "solo numbers."

Sopranos Matthew Alber, Christopher Fritzsche, and Ian Howell; altos Jesse Antin and Philip Wilder; tenors Kevin Baum, Michael Lichtenauer, and Matthew Oltman; bass-baritones Eric Alatorre, David Alan Marshall, and Mark Sullivan each had extended solo passages while sustaining the chorus, producing sonority suitable for *Boris Godunov*.

*Lamentation* opens with a silent procession into the church, the singers carrying parts of the Cross, which is then assembled and the crown of thorns is placed on top. "Golgotha" and "Lament" lead to the descent from the Cross. The second part is at the entrance to the Tomb, the third is in Hades and the Resurrection in Hades, "trampling down death by death," and a silent procession from the church.

Choreographed and directed by Yves Coudray, the work is a semi-staged affair. Chanticleer members, dressed in Star Trek-influenced hospital gowns (or old East German *Parsifal* costumes), carry around a picture of Christ on the cross, they group in various formations, and at a climactic point stand together in the dark, serving as a screen for projected pictures of Madonna and Child and the Crucifixion.

The text is from the Russian Orthodox prayer book: the themes and tone are familiar to readers of the New Testament, but the wording is new and different -- "Like a pelican, with Your side O Word, by wounding have You made Your children that were once dead live by sprinkling them with moisture rich with life."

Tavener has been drawn to Eastern Christianity by its poetry and passion. He has said "I think of (true) Christianity as an Oriental religion that has been dragged by the heels into Western ways of thinking by rationalizing. . . I think that Christianity has never really been truly understood by the West, except perhaps by the Celts."

In the quality of the music and the quiet dignity of the presentation, *Lamentations* realizes what John Adams was trying to do in *El Niño*. A statement of faith enfolded in music that has its own life and validity, regardless of the "message."

## Icebreaker, Icebreaker

### GAVIN BORCHERT

Seattle Chamber Players *Icebreaker Festival*. February 8, Benaroya Recital Hall, Seattle, WA. Through February 10.

The Seattle Chamber Players offer the city's most consistently thrilling new-music concerts. Even more importantly, they've also done missionary work for the cause, taking a wildly well-received John Zorn program to Moscow in December and bringing Russian music back to Seattle in *Icebreaker*. In three days packed with papers, discussions, and concerts, this festival showcased a couple dozen of the post-Schnittke, post-Soviet generation of composers in their 40's and 50's.

The first concert was the best attended -- likely because it featured theremin virtuoso Lydia Kavina, playing an instrument everyone's heard of but few ever hear in concert. There were a few chuckles in the audience as Kavina played her first notes. But the theremin's beauty and flexibility, and Kavina's mastery, won them over in a moment. The top end sounds like a piccolo, the bottom has the warm gravelly sound of a double bass, and the upper-middle range is amazingly voice-like (especially since the playing style tends to add a distinct "w" vowel sound to the start of each note), sounding like a Chinese opera soprano singing under a pile of quilts. We think of the Theremin as an instrument of glissandos, but Kavina's stunning technique made popping staccatos possible; she moved her hand near the volume coil with a brisk snapping motion that looked just like she was plucking the strings of an invisible koto.

Her own compositions, *The Mirror* and *Transformations*, were charming -- knotty and abstract but with still a hint of Prokofiev-style lyricism. Kavina was also heard in Vladimir Nikolaev's *19 Peaks*, a harsh and wintry soundscape in which the string quartet and Theremin imitated each other's glissandos, vibrato and pitch-bending. The real surprise on the concert was Joseph Schillinger's *First Airophonic Suite*, written in 1929 for inventor Leon Theremin and orchestra (here the orchestra part was beautifully arranged by Dmitry Riabtsev for flute, clarinet, piano, and string quartet). Much of the piece was in a heightened, echt-movie-music style that made Max Steiner sound austere; you could practically see credits rolling by as the *Suite* swelled to a close.

Two areas of composition that have particularly interested Russian composers since their contact with the West has increased over the past decade are electronic music and minimalism. The most striking electronic piece was Igor Kefalidis's *Percato molto*, a tour-de-force for tape and a stageful of percussion played by Matt Kocmieroski. The tape itself was made of enlarged, intensified percussion sounds, and the percussionist is asked to play along, matching live gong strokes to the taped modified gong strokes, for example. Kocmieroski's crack timing was astounding; in addition to dashing from one bank of instruments to another (the sort of athleticism familiar to anyone who's ever been to a percussion solo recital), it certainly seemed as though he'd had to completely memorize the tape part to coordinate everything. The piece suggested a couple theatrical subtexts, in interesting opposition to one another. Sometimes Kocmieroski seemed like some sort of uber-percussionist, a sorcerer creating room-filling noise (more noise than percussionists usually do, that is) with each gesture; other times the piece took on pointed political overtones: the performer was a mere puppet-man surrounded by machinery, condemned merely to copy soullessly everything he hears.

A peculiarly Russian take on minimalism was also apparent in a few works. Vladimir Martynov's *Folk Dance* for solo piano (played by the composer) was a two-section piece using bars taken from, or at least recalling, Schubert ländler. The first part was made from block chords in a steady rhythmic groove; increasingly complex grace-note patterns attached like barnacles to the top notes of each chord, fuzzing up the soprano line. In the second, tuneful phrases stopped and started seemingly at random with long pauses in between. The piece was a bit of a dud, but still interesting as a statement. A lot of contemporary composers pay lip service to concepts like "risk" and "challenge"-- and we all know what "challenge" means; it pertains to *them*, out there, the great unwashed, but God forbid contemporary music insiders should ever be asked to re-examine their assumptions. But here, to the SCP's credit, was a piece that proved to be genuinely difficult to sit through even for new-music mavens. Not a success, but admirable in that it truly did take a risk.

Equally heavy-handed were the bludgeoning toccatas of Vladimir Tarnopolski's "To a Theatre" (the final song in his cycle *Scenes from Real Life*) and Nikolai Korndorf's *Get Out!* -- though the latter astonished with its torrents of fast notes, to which Korndorf added foot stomps and shouted syllables in complicated patterns, played by all five instruments in rhythmic unison. The piece climaxed in a great theatrical moment, as one of the players, apparently driven to distraction by fifteen relentless minutes of this, is asked to throw a tantrum--shrieking the work's title at his colleagues and at the audience and tearing up his score. Violinist Mikhail Schmidt, all five-foot-four of him, went hilariously nuts.

Unlike in American minimalism, there wasn't a drop of Asian influence here, nothing of the gamelan or the raga. Repetition was used rhetorically in these works -- it was the point, not a means to a transcendental end. *Icebreaker* did, though, include some pieces reminiscent of the European brand of minimalism, à la Tavener, Pärt, or Bryars. Two songs by Alexander Knaifel were moving and compelling out of all proportion to their modest scope. In *Day*, soprano Svetlana Savenko accompanied herself on the glockenspiel, just a few taps here and there in alternation with her chantlike vocal phrases. The bells were set under the lid of a piano, with the pedal held down, and Savenko also directed her voice into that space, creating a beautiful resonant echo effect. *Bliss* set a long text by Pushkin at a fast tempo (almost like a Gilbert-and-Sullivan patter song), joined by very spare piano and crotales parts. Performer-wise, Savenko was the discovery of the festival; she combined a ravishing, satiny, edge-less vocal timbre with total fearlessness in the face of anything a composer could ask for. One other piece of Knaifel's, *The Comforter* for cello nonet, serenely harmonized a melody taken from his earlier setting of an Orthodox liturgical prayer. A skeptic might say, "So what?" Nine cellos and church chant is a foolproof recipe for a pretty piece. Maybe. But it was indeed gorgeous.

Two piano trios made wonderful first impressions. The titles of Alexander Vustin's two movements, "Lamento" and "Choir," again suggested Part, but the work was full of violent angst: fractured pointillism and angular screams with soul-baring passion. Ivan Sokolov's *Trio* was great fun -- somewhat similar to the Schillinger in harmonic lushness, but in a less melodramatic, more refined, "hothouse" style. What was really astonishing about the piece was the absence of camp--even its most outrageous palm-court moments came off with utter conviction and no self-consciousness. In the marvelous coda, Sokolov gradually stripped down the texture while keeping the opulent chromaticism, resulting in a kind of cross between Erich Korngold and Morton Feldman. This piece exemplified the Seattle Chamber Players' commitment to programming diversity--their goal, brilliantly achieved, was to present as wide a range as they could of contemporary Russian music. The festival was a fascinating and noble attempt to lift the veil on a musical culture largely hidden from Western concertgoers.

# Record Reviews

## Cold Comfort

### MARK ALBURGER

*Adams Cox Fink Fox.* [John Luther Adams. *Dark Wind.* Marty Walker. *Interlude 1. Interlude 2.* Michael Jon Fink. *Thread of Summer.* Rick Cox. *When April May.* Jim Fox. *Between the Wheels*]. Marty Walker, with Amy Knoles, Bryan Pezzone, Maria Newman, Peter Kent, Valerie Dimond, Greg Gottlieb, and Dan Smith. Cold Blue.

*Cold Blue* [Smith. *Beatrix.* Marshall. *Gradual Siciliano (for Gus).* Garland. *The Three Strange Angels.* Lentz. *You Can' See the Forest...Music.* Byron. *Marimbas in the Dorian Mode.* Fox. *Appearance of Red.* Mahler. *La Ciudad de Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles.* Miller. *Weddings, Funerals, and Children Who Cannot Sleep.* Kuhlman. *In This Light.* Cox. *Necessity.* Fink. *Celesta Solo.* Bowen and Budd. *Wonder's Edge.* Tenney. *Spectral CANON for CONLON Nancarrow*]. Cold Blue.

Rick Cox. *Maria Falling Away [All the While Toward Us. Maria Falling Away. Beige 2. The Years in Streams. Long Distance. All The While Toward Us II]*. Cold Blue.

Cold Blue Music is developing a fine reputation as a kind of New Albion south. Like the often-mellow Northern California label, Cold Blue offers a groove and a point of view. It's a Southern Californian meditative and hip spin on what's happening in new music.

So it makes perfect sense on this combo album *Adams Cox Fink Fox* to start off with Alaskan composer John Luther Adams, right? Adams's Cold contribution, *Dark Wind*, is a warm dronic music that shimmers in sensuality.

Two interludes by clarinetist-composer Marty Walker serve to connect works by the composers listed on the CD front cover. Michael John Fink's *Thread of Summer* makes connections to Stravinsky in lonely clarinet lines and to Varèse in a motive on violins that seems redolent of the opening *Octandre* oboe line. This is a gentle music that whispers Mussorgsky, rather than shouting something merely modern.

Rick Cox's *When April May* is just plain old beautiful music, in the tradition of Harold Budd and Ingram Marshall -- compellingly lovely, with a little bit of the sternness and rapture found in Bartók and Debussy (a pensive major second wiggle, for one). Clarinet again makes the connection to the concluding *Beneath the Wheels*, a mysterious, sustained-tremoli work by Jim Fox. There's a high whispering violin harmonic reminiscent of the conclusion of Crumb's *Night of the Full Moons*, and here the timbre is explored fully. This delicate music connects nicely back to the Adams to bring the album full circle.

In addition to Walker, the other excellent players are mallet percussionist Amy Knoles, pianist Bryan Pezzone, violinists Maria Newman and Peter Kent, violist Valerie Dimond, and cellists Greg Gottlieb and Dan Smith.

Even more of a combination plate is the sampler *Cold Blue* (most of which was previously released on an LP in 1984), which features no less than 14 composers, beginning with Chas Smith and his *Beatrix* for pedal steel guitar and banjo. This is a sustained work with one very effective electronic outburst that subsides into calm yet again. Ingram Marshall's *Gradual Siciliano (for Gus)* features less of the siciliano rhythm but more of the spirit of cafe Italy in its wistful tremoli of mandolin, piano, and electronics. Who would guess that it was recorded in San Francisco (indeed, at New Albion)?

Peter Garland's *Three Strange Angels* is an original thrash -- with roots in bangy experimentalism, neoprimitism, and modernism, and with branches that certainly extend to J.L. Adams's Inuit works. The scoring for piano (with the composer) and drum and bullroarer (Jack Loeffler) is simple and brilliant. Simply brilliant. The bullroarer sounds like a motorcycle, the piano lays down a simple/complex/empty chord that is redolent of Stockhausen and the minimalists (new group?). Funny. Strange. Moving.

Daniel Lentz offers a text-sound piece for "three speaker-drinkers with three wine glasses (with mallets) and red wine in *You Can' See the Forest...Music*. The speaker-drinkers are Daniel Lentz, Garry Eister, and Stan Carey and they apparently have a good time. The winey music sounds like drunken gamelan. Hic!

Michael Byron's *Marimbas in the Dorian Mode* are just that, with a tremolo quartet of William Winant, Beverly Johnson, Kevin Little, and Mike Perry, recorded by David Rosenboom. Jim Fox's *Appearance of Red* has the spiritual uplift of the last movement of Crumb's *Music for a Summer Evening* coupled with a meditative minimalist sensibility, a fine sense of line, and growing intimations of unease.

The Mahler of *La Ciudad de Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles* is David. This is tremolo, interval, and chord-change piano that, unlike Gustav, finds its calm center and is content to be. Read Miller's *Weddings, Funerals, and Children Who Cannot Sleep* is considerably more unsettling in the serge-processed voices of Janyce Collins and the composer. John Kulman adds electric guitar and trombone to the voice mix *In This Light*, a rhythmically charged work of hypnotic and scary energy. Buddhist monks on speed.

*Necessity*, by Rick Cox, has some of the same electric guitaric sustain, but now prepared, elegiac, and grandly ominous. There are prayer bells and insects and overtones. Michael John Fink returns us to earth gently as celesta soloist in a sadly poignant *Celesta Solo* of lost innocence. Guitar synthesizerist Eugene Bowen and keyboard synthesizerist Harold Budd team up for an enlightened/funky *Wonder's Edge*. James Tenney's sternly microtonal *Spectral CANON for CONLON Nancarrow* rounds out the festivities with growing frenetic complexities.

What does it all add up to? An art of confidence and uncertainty. A queasy alliance of beauty and tragedy pointedly exemplified by the CD's cover art: a distant tornado, and hyenas on a storm-clouded Serengeti plain.

But it's a picture of a tornado, a picture of hyenas. Nothing really to get upset about. And reliably the groove of Cold Blue is listener-friendly. You can pop in any disc and receive enlightenment, but at the same time, you won't spoil the party going on in the room with your friends.

Rick Cox's *Maria Falling Away* is another case in point. It's a beautiful series of musics for electric guitarist / wind player Cox, the excellent trumpeter Jon Hasell, and peers Thomas Newman (piano), Jeff Elmassian (clarinet), and Chas Smith (pedal steel guitar). You will be both soothed and stimulated, edified and entertained. Cox proves a haunting alto saxophonist on track 3, *Beige*, to Newman's sensitive accompaniment. There's some Harold Budd, Daniel Lentz, and even Pink Floyd.... Track 5, *Long Distance*, adds a rhythm track to the *Hearts-of-Space* textures.

## A Spoolful of Schoenbeck, Baker, and Cameron

### MARK ALBURGER

Travis Baker. Sara Schoenbeck. *Yesca One* [Baker. 12341241. *Yesca One Seven*. Ellen Burr. *Cards #2*. *Cards #2*. Baker and Schoenbeck. *Blip*. *When One*. *Bungalow Hop*. *Extra Over*. *Rocky Clucks*. *Effervescing*]. Sara Schoenbeck, bassoon; Travis Baker, Bass. Spool.

Allison Cameron. *Ornaments* [*Retablo*. *Ornaments*. *Somatic Refrain*. *Three Shapes Of the Sword*]. Colleen Cook, Carol Fujima, Margaret Gay, Eve Egoyan, Allison Cameron, Gary Kulesha, Marc Sabat, Stephen Clarke, Ronda Ridone. Spool.

There are composer-performers and then there are composer-performers. The one type are composers who happen to be performers. The other are composers who often create their works directly through their performances. Often these are composer-improvisers, many of whom seem to have roots in both post-Cageian classical music and free jazz.

Two of these are bassoonist Sara Schoenbeck and bassist Travis Baker. They team up on *Yesca One* to telling effect in fresh, bravura performances that cross all sorts of lines but are never at cross-purposes to one another. Baker often functions as a one-man rhythm section in violent pizzicati and nervous and ruminative running figures. Schoenbeck blows her top as well as any saxist and is capable of a torrent of post-bop virtuosity and Bruno Bartolozzi overtoning. Their work together, Baker's solo-credited compositions, and contributions from guest composer Ellen Burr are all of a piece -- consistently creative and eclectically electrifying.

Allison Cameron appears to be that other kind of inventive individual: the composer who also happens to be a performer. Funny how the two types divide. The performer-composers, if you will, tend to improvise and provide little in the way of program notes (Baker and Schoenbeck). If they are the downtown type, the composers-who-also-perform seem uptown, more academically-oriented. Cameron's opus, *Ornaments*, on the same Spool label, provides a plethora of program notes (engagingly written by Martin Arnold) and takes the ornaments seriously.

Beginning with *Retablo* (1998 -- this school dates its works), Cameron builds up a meditative, Feldman-like texture from a Volga Boatman fragment and a Messiaen doubling of violin and piano that soon goes its own way with the addition of clarinet and percussion (Cameron plays the latter, consisting of toy piano and acolyte bells). There's also a conductor for these fine players -- Gary Kulesha -- and the forces also included clarinetist Colleen Cook, violinist Carol Fujima, cellist Margaret Gay, and pianist Eve Egoyan. The three movements -- "Passamezzo," "Almayne," and "Pentacles" -- transition into each other gracefully, with little orientalist-Crumbian punctuations provided by percussion in the second section, and lonely pizzicati and sustains in the third.

The title selection, *Ornaments*, performed sensitively by violinist Marc Sabat and pianist Stephen Clarke, has a delicate, pointillistic mien, with suggestions of Celtic and medieval musics. The cranky *Somatic Refrain*, for bass clarinetist Ronda Rindone, couldn't be much more demonstratively different in its opening (Cold Blue's Marty Walker getting up on the wrong side of the bed), but it eventually settles down to something hushed and remote.

*Three Shapes Of The Sword* is performed by Clarke on a contemporarily-constructed Stein forte-piano. The first of its three movements, "Rio Grande del Sur," sounds like a headstrong, monophonic exercise à la Canon, with perhaps a bit of the spirit of an impassioned bebop solo. The second selection, "Spiteful Scar," brings a bit of preparation into the mix, with suggestions of Cage and Crumb. The final section, "John Vincent Moon," has prepared flourishes and silences in its five-minute course.

## The Requiem Challenge

### JEFF DUNN

Richard Danielpour. *An American Requiem* (2001). Pacific Symphony Orchestra, soloists and Chorale conducted by Carl St. Clair. Reference Recordings RR-97CD.

Requiems! May they rest in peace -- but they cannot. Any composer today should be daunted by the task of writing a new one.

What Richard Danielpour has going for him are heart and excellence of orchestration. The challenges he faces are the limitations of his own ultraconservative style and the long shadows cast by previous composers. The composition under review has a few effective moments, and plenty of sincerity, but represents a failure in advancing the future of music in terms of casting any shadows of its own.

And the events of September 11 will be generating a host of competitive requiems. Danielpour had just opened an engraving of the work for final editing when the World Trade Center was struck, so his got to be one of the first to be dedicated to the victims. Danielpour had been intending the work as "both a tribute to the American soldier and examination of war." As he relates in the notes,

My initial interest in writing the piece ... began in 1998 when I started to establish dialogues with American veterans of World War II, the Korean War and the war in Vietnam. It became immediately apparent to me that, in my life, I had completely bypassed anything having to do directly with the experiences that had shaped, and in some ways, defined the lives of these servicemen. ... I sought to juxtapose the personal, private issues that arose out of these campaigns with the more public, global and philosophical ones.

Ambitious goals -- especially considering the insurmountable masterpiece of Benjamin Britten's essay in the form. And to call it an American requiem invites comparisons with the tactics of Brahms's *German Requiem*. Nevertheless, Danielpour persevered, imitating Britten more than Brahms, interspersing Latin text with American poetry. A semi-American requiem, then. But which poetry to use? Time to employ a consultant, Kim Vaeth, Poetic Text Editor, who searched through 500-plus texts for the right ones. As she puts it, "each word of the nine poems [chosen] has risen from a great depth and carries the phosphor trail of other works."

Not to mention musical phosphor trails. The choice of Walt Whitman's *Dirge for Two Veterans* is a risky one, considering the immensely effective music set to the same words by Ralph Vaughan Williams in his *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Vaughan Williams has the right pace for the processional, plus the conventional funeral-march dotted rhythm that practically screams from the line "And every blow from the great convulsive drums." Danielpour ignores this and instead tries a faster-paced 4/4 approach with heavy accents on the first three beats. Why take on the Vaughan Williams and force every listener familiar with it to be disappointed and long to put on a CD of the earlier work? Next time use another consultant.

On the other hand, Danielpour does succeed with less familiar material. His *Agnus Dei* includes a most moving setting of words by Michael Harper: "We visit bark/an unmarked grave,/the money,/the grass, the ground/your face,/no stone, your voice,/we kiss the air." The Latin *Sanctus* and *Lux Aeterna* show Danielpour at his orchestral and choral best.

All three soloists do an excellent job, especially tenor Hugh Smith, whose voice is reminiscent of Peter Pears. The orchestra and recording are fine as well, except for a couple of moments when the voices seem too distant.

So, a mixed result. Other composers working on *their* American requiems need not worry. The definitive one has yet to be written.

## Flying Objects

### MARK ALBURGER

Michael Daugherty. *UFO* [*UFO. Motown Metal. Niagara Falls. Desi. Red Cape Tango*]. North Texas Wind Symphony, conducted by Eugene Migliari Corporon, with percussionist Evelyn Glennie. Klavier.

When an important composer and an important percussionist team up you almost can't help but fly high, and so it is with *UFO* (Klavier), where Michael Daugherty and Evelyn Glennie get together with the North Texas Wind Symphony for fireworks aplenty.

Daugherty, who has made a career out of art-musiking the tacky side of contemporary pop culture (there's another side?), delivers in the titular five-movement percussion concerto. After an overture-like free romp of solo "waterphone and mechanical siren," with Berio-like vocals, percussionist and ensemble kick it in the ultra-programmatic "Unidentified." Glennie, who revels in multiple percussion, is in her element here, beginning with quickly ascending scales in xylophone, cymballic responses, and rising kicky lines in the sax ensemble.

Soloist performs on xylophone, ice cymbal, crasher, slasher, brake drum, spring (or other "trash") instruments, earth plate, cymbal disc, and Chinese gong. In July 1947 near Roswell, New Mexico, a rancher heard a loud explosion and discovered strange metal scraps in the desert. Responding to national newspaper reports of this "UFO crash," government agencies quickly converged on the wreckage site and confiscated the evidence. The "incident at Roswell" resonates in the popular imagination because to this day the government file remains top secret. What happened to those scattered metal scraps? They resonate on the concert stage, as the percussionist plays on xylophone and eight pieces of unidentified metal.

Ha, ha. Hmm. Maybe it's also no surprise that some of the woodwind writing sounds like Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. On the other hand, why does some of it sound like lounge lizard music (lots of muted trumpet)? 'Cause that's part of Daugherty's sound universe, too. Movement 3, "Flying," has a scintillating major second melodic wiggle that is quite appealing. It depicts

An airplane pilot flying near Mount Rainier, Washington, [who] spotted a formation of bright objects which he described as "flying saucers," traveling at incredible speed through the sky. This 1947 sighting made international headlines and launched the modern UFO craze, with the proliferation of UFO magazines, clubs, conferences, photographs, and films. . . . A mysterious melody, introduced by the vibraphone, is echoed kaleidoscopically like a halo of sound throughout the ensemble. Periodically this slow motion music accelerates into fugues flying at supersonic tempos. The solo percussionist gives a virtuoso performance on vibraphone, marteau, and cymbals that hover and shimmer in the air like flying saucers.

Yes, Glennie really scoots along on that hard-sticked vibraphone. Often the dampers are on and the motor is off, but then she vibratos into the clouds. Roger! The wind ensemble has some surprisingly beautiful moments. And Glennie gets to Takemitsu it up (thinking about the great Japanese composer's *Cassiopeia* percussion concerto). There's even an homage to "weird *Star Trek* music," in the descending slides of French horns (used, among other times in the classic series, for shape-changing monsters and slow-motion time).

As for "???", what can we say? It's another nervous solo percussion piece (augmented by contrabassoon and optional percussion performers placed around the performance space), a fellow "Traveling Music." A relief.

Soloist performs on non-pitched "alien" instruments. . . .

The finale fifth has a descending 5/4 jazzy, Bernstein line that immediately pleases. It has all the catchiness of an old-time hit single, with a touch of Varèse or Satie in its strident siren. Now Glennie's on

5 tom-toms, 8 octobans, bongos, kit bass drum, "alien" cymbal, 3 small cymbals, various metal objects, 3 woodblocks, 3 Latin cowbells, mechanical siren, and waterphone. . . . The secret military base called Area 51 is located somewhere in the Nevada Nuclear Test Site and is reputed to be the repository for alien objects. . . . [T]his section features percussion instruments that suggest the outer trappings and inner machinery of a fine-tuned alien aircraft.

But it's still rock-n-roll to me, bucko. Boffo. But, by golly, some of it does sound like its inna alien ship. You don't suppose.... Final cadenza, final ensemble statement, false coda, coda, applause.

Discounting "Traveling" and "???", the three major movements form "Unidentified," "Flying," "Objects" -- just in case the point was missed.... This is all a wildly inventive music that does many things well, and constantly surprises. A breath of fresh air, music to revisit. It is also a wonderful addition to the list of truly great wind-ensemble pieces (Hovhaness, Levinson, Surinach, Stravinsky, and Vaughan Williams are on the list -- any others? -- certainly there are at least moments elsewhere....). Daugherty, Glennie, and the North Texas Wind Symphony definitely catch the fun of new music.

Four shorter works complete the CD. *Motown Metal* has Bartók/Shostakovich-ascending, growly, motor-city trombone slides, a Star Trek ascending trumpet motive, Mission Impossible asymmetrical meters, Varesian trombone laughs, *Spy-Vs-Spy* jazz licks, and contrapuntal reveille hits. This guy knows how to write. All very clever.

*Niagara Falls* is based on a four-note chromatic motive applied to the name (think *Three Stooges*). There's more haunted house and wax museum than nature in this music, but, come to think of it, that's about how it is in real life, too. Tacky, tacky; over-the-top; and a bit Stravinskian bluesy film-noir exotic.

Daugherty certainly has done his part for wind bands, and continues here with *Desi*, in homage to Arnaz. Not surprisingly, the music is permeated with Latin rhythms and big band brass. Eighth-eighth, eighth-eighth, dotted-eighth-sixteenth, quarter rest, dotted-eighth-sixteenth. As elsewhere, Daugherty uses this raw material to his own design, just as Haydn would, just as Copland would. Here's an American music for ya.

*Red Cape Tango* is the only excerpt-arrangement here: an adaptation done by Mark Spede, under the composer's supervision, of the final movement of *Metropolis Symphony*, a work inspired by the 50th anniversary of Superman's first appearance in the comics. The Warhol of composers gives us his own caper on the *Dies Irae*, marking a place for himself in the long line of later-day diablos, including Rachmaninoff. Crumb uses maracas, Daugherty castanets and Berlioz's chimes. Hmm. A bit of Adams's timekeeping and a bolero. No one has made the Latin sequence sound so Latinate and swanky.

## Philip on Film

### MICHAEL MCDONAGH

Philip Glass. *Philip On Film* Conducted by Michael Riesman and Harry Rabinowitz, with the Kronos Quartet, English Chamber Orchestra, and Philip Glass Ensemble. Nonesuch 79660-2..

Philip Glass has written prolifically in almost every musical medium, and has, in the process, invented several new ones.

*Einstein on the Beach* (1975-76) broke new ground, and subsequent pieces like *Les Enfants Terribles* (1996), continue to do so. Glass' work in film has paralleled that in his concert works, and both have heightened and deepened his already acute sense of musico-dramatic timing. This five-CD set also shows how his theatrical music has developed over the last 20-plus years. Film has always attracted many of the best composers, and Glass is no exception.

His role as a performing musician (on keyboards) has also given him a unique perspective on how his pieces work when played live, in real time, with the images for which they were written, and four of the five CDs here are devoted to scores conceived, and done that way. Two of his best large-scale scores are the ones he wrote for *Dracula* (1931 - which originally had no music other than bits of *Lohengrin*), and Cocteau's 1946 *La Belle et la Bete*, which replaced the perfectly beautiful soundtrack by Georges Auric.

For *Dracula*, Glass writes an intimate score, which operates at a certain remove from the melodrama depicted onscreen. This string quartet score was written for Kronos, and it's played by them here. The music uses techniques common to this classic layout, and Glass has written very expressive music. Excited unisons give way to bare poignancy -- in "Excellent, Mr. Renfield," the composer pits violist Hank Dutt's obsessive six-note figure -- reminiscent of a hurdy-gurdy tune -- against the sweetly moody material of the first and second violins -- David Harrington and John Sherba -- and Joan Jeanrenaud's pizzicato cello, so that you feel Renfield's madness and his isolation. There are odd, but perfectly apt moments like the intertwining tritones in "Horrible Tragedy," as well as the broad, sustained, and hymnlike "In The Theatre." *Dracula* is Glass's sixth string quartet (from his post-1965 period), and it's a powerful addition to his work in this form.

The composer's tactic in *La Belle et la Bete* is even more radical. Here Glass removes the original score, which he replaces with the actors' voices, and live singers singing the dialogue. The picture therefore becomes a silent one with music and voices, as well as a music theatre work with film. This adds layers of enchantment to an already enchanting picture. Glass's expanded dream-time scale also makes *Dracula* and *La Belle et la Bete* bigger, so that they feel considerably more dramatic, and definitely more moving. Mezzo Janice Felty as Beauty, and baritone Gregory Purnhagen as Beast give richly characterized portrayals. The Philip Glass Ensemble is augmented here by 18 musicians who play an arrangement made by conductor-composer Michael Riesman. They make the score's considerable difficulties seem as easy as pie.



# Calendar

April 7

Beg Trio and Moxie. Musicians Union Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center presents Dominick Argento's *Miss Manners on Music*. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY.

April 8

Penderecki String Quartet in *Second Quartets* -- those of Bartók, Szymanowski, and Ligeti. Bing Theater, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

April 11

San Francisco Contemporary Players in Vaino's *The Voices of Silence*, Lippe's *Music for Harp and Tape*, Alvarez's *Mambo Vinko*, and R.B. Smith's *Return to Breath*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

April 12

Eric Dolphy. Miller Theater, Columbia University, New York, NY.

April 13

*When Morty Met John*, with John La Barbara, Margaret Leng Tan, and Flux Quartet. Weill Recital Hall and St. Paul's Chapel, New York, NY.

April 14

Musicians from Marlboro perform Hindemith's *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings*. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

April 16

*Live Performance in the 21st Century*, with Meredith Monk and John Zorn. White Box, New York, NY.

April 17

Paul Drescher's *SoundStage* (text by Rinde Eckert), with Zeitgeist. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. Through April 28.

April 18

Marilyn Nonken performs Jason Eckardt's *A Glimpse Retraced*. Columbia University, New York, NY.

April 19

*Silk Road Project*, with music of Lou Harrison and Zakir Hussain. Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA. *Project* programs through April 24.

April 20

Gunther Schuller's *Classical Symphony* premiered by Orchestra 2001. Trinity Center, Philadelphia, PA. Repeated April 21, Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore.

April 22

Triple Helix. Bing Theater, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

April 23

North/South Consonance presents *Merci Madam*. Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY

April 24

San Francisco Symphony in Messiaen's *Turangalila Symphony*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through April 27.

April 28

*Project Webern*, with Paul Griffiths and Susan Narucki. The Morgan Library, New York, NY.

April 30

*Cross Media: Contemporary Art and Its Audience*, with Phil Kline and Meredith Monk. White Box, New York, NY.

# Chronicle

February 1

Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA. Also February 2.

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus in Ives's *Symphony No. 4*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through the week of February 10, Carnegie Hall, New York (NY). "[The symphony] is radical in the cacophonous juxtaposition of . . . comfortably familiar elements . . . . One problem the work presents is that these conflicting currents sometimes need to be distinct and sometimes muddled. The muddying takes care of itself . . . . Mr. Thomas and his orchestra . . . gave a spectacular performance" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 2/16/02].

David Slusser's *Appalachian Strip Mine*. Meridian Gallery, San Francisco, CA.

*Composer Jazz Portraits: James Black*, with Eric Reed. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

*The Mendelssohn Project*, featuring the composer's revised version of his *Symphony No. 4 ("Italian")*. Church of the Blessed Sacrament, New York, NY.

David Shimoni. Swarthmore College, PA.

February 2

Music of Ingolf Dahl. Trinity Chapel, Berkeley, CA.

*Harry Partch Centennial*, with Danlee Mitchell, Lou Harrison, Philip Blackburn, and Charles Amirkhanian. San Jose State University, San Jose, CA.

Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (in the Schoenberg arrangement) performed by Orchestra 2001. Kimmel Center, Philadelphia, PA. Repeated February 3, Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore.

Seattle Symphony performs Glass's *Dancissimo*. Seattle, WA. Repeated February 3.

February 3

John Cage's *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet*, with Merce Cunningham and Mikel Rouse. Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA. "A collage of quotations and inventions, it imagines conversations among 15 figures in modern culture, including Joyce, Duchamp, Satie and Buckminster Fuller. . . . The sound components -- apart from text -- of *An Alphabet* were developed by Mikel Rouse from a manuscript Cage left at his death" [Kenneth Baker, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/5/02]. "An intellectual romp of high refinement and eminent good cheer . . . . celebrating the enduring insights and sheer giddiness of the 20th century avant-garde. Credit Laura Kuhn of the Cage Trust for assembling this 75-minute presentation . . . and for directing this 1982 radio play by the composer, writer and visual artist who died in 1992. . . . Why Joyce, Duchamp and Satie? In his introduction, Cage allows that the works of the Irish novelist, French artist and French composer 'have resisted the march of understanding and so are as fresh as when they first were made.' . . . There's Satie [Cunningham] recalling a visit to composer Conlon Nancarrow, pronouncing on *Furniture Music* and reciting a testimonial from a happy consumer: 'Four or five applications of your *Third Gymnopédie* cured me completely . . . . On tape, there is Duchamp's female alter ego, Rose Sélavy, in the voice of artist Jasper Johns. Onstage, there are contributions from Mao Zedong, Henry Thoreau, Jonathan Albert, Buckminster Fuller, Thorstein Veblen, the second century Greek poet Oppian and Mormon Brigham Young . . . . The audience . . . can hear Cage's enchanting taped score, left in manuscript at his death and assembled by a team led by Mikel Rouse. *An Alphabet* features 197 sounds, divided between cued material and that determined by chance operations, and it never seems less than apt. [The] droll, polished performers made a splendid team. And no one was more splendid than choreographer Cunningham, whose line readings, often in tandem with his recorded voice, shared in the dry wit and effortless timing one recalls from his dancing days. His Satie asks: 'Why is it easier to bore people than to entertain them?' Cunningham did it the harder way" [Allan Ulrich, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/7/02].

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Carmel-by-the-Sea* performed by the Los Angeles Doctors Symphony. Culver City, CA.

American Composers Orchestra in the premiere of Philip Glass's *Symphony No. 6*, plus his *Passages* (with Ravi Shankar). Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

February 4

Carlos Surinach's *Concertino for Piano, Strings, and Cymbals* given by Orquestra Sinfonica de Tenerife. Tenerife, Spain.

Guy Livingston in *60 Seconds for Piano*. 60 works by 60 composers. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

*Earplay* in a concert featuring Champion's *Mathematica*, performed by Tod Brody. Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco, CA.

February 5

Morton Gould's *Tap Dance Concerto* performed by the Jefferson City Symphony. Jefferson City, MO.

February 6

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through the week of February 10, Carnegie Hall, New York (NY). "Often the Romantic and the modern dovetailed so thoroughly that the line between them faded. That was probably Mr. Thomas's point. *Das Lied von Der Erde* . . . [is] roughly contemporary [with Ives's *Symphony No. 4*]: the Mahler was completed in 1909; the Ives was started that year and finished in 1916. Mahler and Ives had little in common, but each had an idiosyncratic vision of the universe and how it could be represented in music. Mahler's vision was idealized and magnified, and he used a sumptuous, refined language to convey emotional and spiritual highs and lows. Ives had no patience for refinement and sumptuousness. He saw the world as a riot of competing interests -- the spiritual and the venal, the sober and the laughable -- and that was how he composed it" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 2/16/02].

February 7

Juilliard String Quartet in Carter's *Quartet No. 5*. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY.

February 8

Steven Gerber's *Ode for String Orchestra* performed by the National Chamber Orchestra. F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre, Rockville, MD. Repeated February 9.

David Robinson conducts the St. Louis Symphony in Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes of Carl Maria von Weber* and Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand* (with Gary Graffman) New York, NY. "Surely the grandiose title of this is tongue in cheek. Here Hindemith uses some inconsequential tunes of von Weber as thematic materials for a glittery and clever orchestral showpiece. It sounded particularly witty in Robertson's sly account, which revealed the humor in the music (the overly rigorous contrapuntal writing of the first movement, the faux Asian exotica of the 'Turandot' scherzo, with its galumphing fugue for brass) rather than poking fun at it. . . . [H]e and the imaginative soloist . . . gave a performance of [the] Ravel . . . that had this rhapsodic, harmonically daring work sounding cutting-edge" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 2/11/02].

Robert Kapilow's *Dr. Seuss's Green Eggs and Ham* presented by Opera Memphis. Memphis, TN. Through February 26.

*Icebreaker Festival*. Firsova's *Vernal Equinox*, Gubaidulina's *Piano Sonata*, Schnittke's *Sounding Letters*, Smirnov's *Opus III*, and Ustvolskaya's *Piano Sonata No. 5* and *No. 6*. Seattle, WA.

February 9

*10th Annual Ussachevsky Festival*, featuring Tom Flaherty's *Violation*. Pomona College, Claremont, CA.

Monterey County Composers Forum, with music of Bruce Hamill, Dale Victorine, and Steve Ettinger. Carl Cherry Center, Carmel, CA. Repeated February 10, First United Methodist Church, Salinas.

Chinese New Year Celebration, with members of the San Francisco Symphony, in a program including music from Tan Dun's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Bang on a Can All-Stars perform Tan Dun's *Concerto for Six*, Scott Johnson's *Illusion of Guidance*, and Don Byron's *Basquiat* and *Eugene I*. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY. "*Concerto for Six* dashed against the ear with bracing exuberance, like a breaking ocean wave. . . . Johnson's delight, by contrast, seemed more involved with rhythm and texture; his piece presented a more sophisticated surface, without sacrificing accessibility. . . . The highlight of Mr. Byron's contribution was his stunning clarinet solo in his *Basquiat*, in which the other instruments accompany with a brooding, keening gentleness that builds in dramatic intensity without greatly increasing in volume, like the sinister tread of a pacing panther" [Anne Midgette, *The New York Times*, 2/12/02].

February 10

Death of Dave Van Ronk (b. 6/30/36), of colon cancer, at 65. New York, NY. "[He was] an folk singer . . . [of] early 1960's New York. . . and an early mentor to Bob Dylan . . . . Nicknamed the Mayor of Greenwich Village in deference to his authoritative knowledge of jazz and blues, Mr. Van Ronk was an influential performer for four decades. . . . His most recent album was the jazz-influenced *Sweet & Lowdown*, which was released last year. . . . Dylan frequently stayed in Mr. Van Ronk's Greenwich Village apartment. . . . [Van Ronk] was also a songwriter . . . [whose] work was later adapted by the Byrds [and Dylan]. . . . On the liner notes of his self-titled debut album, Mr. Dylan credited Mr. Van Ronk with introducing him to 'House of the Rising Sun'" [Reuters, 2/11/02]. "He was nicknamed the Mayor of Macdougall Street, and his apartment became a gathering place for folk musicians of his own generation and the ones that followed, among them Tom Paxton, Janis Ian, Christine Lavin and Suzanne Vega. . . . His grandfather had played ragtime piano at Catskill Mountain resorts . . . 'I went to the Jazz Record Center looking to pick up a Hot Five recording,' he said, referring to Louis Armstrong's group. 'And I ran across a Blind Lemon Jefferson. If the Hot Five cost a dollar and a half and the Blind Lemon Jefferson cost 35 cents, if you're a 14-year-old kid, what are you going to do?' . . . He made his first recording *Skiffle in Stereo* in 1958 as a member of the Orange Blossom Jug Five. 'It was truly appalling,' Mr. Van Ronk once said, 'but we couldn't stop them from putting it out.' He made his first solo album in 1959 for the Folkways label, *Dave Van Ronk Sings Earthy Blues and Ballads*, followed in 1960 by *Dave Van Ronk Sings Ballads, Blues and Spirituals*. With those albums, which were reissued by Smithsonian Folkways in 1991, he was able to start touring nationally on the growing folk circuit. Early in the 60's, when Peter Yarrow's manager was putting together the group that would become Peter, Paul and Mary, Mr. Van Ronk was considered for the spot that went to Noel Paul Stookey. When folk singers were flocking to Greenwich Village, Mr. Van Ronk encouraged many of them, including Bob Dylan, a frequent overnight guest. He was fond of cooking, and an invitation to one of his elaborate meals was a sign of musical approval. . . . Van Ronk was left-handed but played the guitar right-handed. Although he did not read music, he made transcriptions of pieces like *Maple Leaf Rag* with a system of notation that he invented. . . . He narrated a version of *Peter and the Wolf* with the Prokofiev score arranged for jug band in 1990 and made an album of Bertolt Brecht songs in 1992. . . . 'Dave was always extremely interested in the next generation,' said his wife, Andrea Vuocolo, who survives him. 'I can remember him lecturing some of the other performers of his generation, saying, 'You have to pay attention to what the kids are doing'" [Jon Pareles, *The New York Times*, 2/12/02].

February 12

Foss's *Time Cycle*, *Tashi*, *Three American Pieces*, and *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

*Composer Portraits: Sofia Gubaidulina*, with Continuum. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

February 13

San Francisco Symphony in Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* and *Theme and Variations*, and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

February 13

Death of Waylon Jennings (b. 6/15/37, Littlefield, TX), after a long battle with diabetes-related health problems, at 64. Chandler, AZ. "Jennings recorded 60 albums and had 16 No. 1 country singles in a career that spanned five decades and began when he played bass for Buddy Holly. . . . He was scheduled to fly on the light plane that crashed and killed Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. Richardson . . . Jennings gave up his seat on the plane to Richardson, who was ill and wanted to fly rather than travel by bus . . . His resonant, authoritative voice also was used to narrate . . . *The Dukes of Hazard*. He sang its theme song, which was a million seller. . . . About his independence, he said, 'There's always one more way to do something -- your way.' . . . He often refused to attend music awards shows on grounds performers should not compete against one another. . . . For about 10 years he declined to appear on the Grand Ole Opry because a full set of drums was forbidden at the time. . . . He and Holly were teenage friends . . . . Once in Nashville he and Johnny Cash became friends and roommates. . . . In the mid-1980's he joined with [Willie] Nelson, Mr. Cash and Kris Kristofferson to form the quartet the Highwaymen . . . . His . . . hit singles included 'I'm a Ramblin' Man,' 'Amanda,' 'Lucille,' 'I've Always Been Crazy' and 'Rose in Paradise.' . . . He has said he spent 21 years on drugs and had a \$1,500-a-day cocaine habit. 'I did more drugs than anybody you ever saw in your life,' he told . . . *Close Up* magazine in 1994" [AP].

February 14

John Corigliano's *Promenade Overture* and William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* performed by the Savannah Symphony. Savannah, GA.

Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. Supernumerary Simon Deonarian falls or jumps into the orchestra pit, unhurt, though landing on and crushing the bow of assistant principal violinist Sylvia Danburg. Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY. "[O]ne of the most monumental productions in the company's history: an extravaganza sung by 52 soloists and 120 choristers and including the 227 extras, a horse, a goat and a dog on a revolving domed set" [Ralph Blumenthal, *The New York Times*, 2/20/02].

February 15

John Adams's 55th birthday. Berkeley, CA.

Amanda Moody's *Serial Murderess*, with music of Clark Suprynowicz, performed by Amanda Moody and Mark Alburger, Venue 9 San Francisco, CA.

WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne in Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 11*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

NeoPhonia presents Waters's *Foundation Suite*, Knox's *2002*, Domos's *Tonoi III*, and McNair's *A Tarnished Dream*. Recital Hall, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.

Kurt Masur conducts the New York Philharmonic in Dutilleux's *The Shadows of Time* and the Gorchakov orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. Through February 19. "[T]he orchestration by Sergei Gorchakov . . . has some claims over the familiar Ravel version in following Mussorgsky's bare harmony at points where Rimsky-Korsakov, whose edition was Ravel's source, tidied things up. Whether the Gorchakov score is more Mussorgskian in orchestral sound is another matter, but with a large brass section based on two tubas it is certainly more massive, and Mr. Masur and his musicians hurled its great weights impressively" [Paul Griffiths, *The New York Times*, 2/20/02].

Dicapo Opera presents Weill's *Street Scene*. 184 E. 76th Street, New York, NY. Repeated February 16.

February 16

Empyrean Ensemble. Julia Morgan Theater, Berkeley, CA. Repeated February 17, Varsity Theater, Davis.

*Xenakis: Complete Works for Piano*. Merkin Hall, New York, NY.

Death of ceramist Peter Voulkos, of a heart attack, at age 78. Bowling Green, OH. "He . . . lived in Oakland [CA] . . . . In the summer of 1953 he taught a course at the experimental, interdisciplinary Black Mountain College, near Asheville [NC] . . . . There he met men who were soon to be legends, including Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Charles Olson. . . . The extreme unpredictability of the [Japanese wood-burning kiln] process -- in which temperatures could not be maintained evenly, and fire and ash frequently discolored the glazes -- dovetailed with Mr. Voulkos's love of accident and spontaneity" [Roberta Smith, *The New York Times*, 2/21/02].

February 17

North/South Consonance presents Beeson's *Practice in the Art of Elocution* and Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY.

February 18

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in *Big Bang*. Xenakis's *Psappha* (1975), Zorn's *Gris-gris*, Cox's *World a tuning fork*, Greenberg's *Funny Like a Monkey*, and Wayne Peterson's *Nonet*. Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, CA. "[T]he . . . standout was *Psappha* . . . [a] 14-minute extravaganza . . . Zorn's nine-minute exercise consists of a handful of interesting but diverse inventions, strung together with his customary disdain for form." Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/20/02].

Juilliard Orchestra in Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and Bartók's *Viola Concerto*. "Kyle Armbrust . . . gave an assured, brilliant and stylish account of this . . . work, which Bartók left somewhat unfinished and almost totally unorchestrated at his death in 1945. . . . It was completed by his Hungarian colleague Tibor Serly" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 2/20/02].

February 19

*Piano on the Edge*. Columbia University, New York, NY.

February 20

Tajalon in music of Steve Reich and David Lang. Washington Square Church, New York, NY.

Death of Ronald Freed, stricken by a sudden brain hemorrhage. Valley Forge, PA. "[He] was President of European American Music for over 20. . . a Director and past President of the Music Publishers' Association [and] was a Director of ASCAP [J.W. Pepper & Son].

February 21

*Terry Riley and Bach*, with the New Century Chamber Orchestra, including Riley's *Remember This O Mind*. St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley, CA. Through February 24, Osher Marin Jewish Community Center, San Rafael, CA.

February 22

Aaron Jay Kernis's *Second Symphony* performed by the Symphony Orchestra of the Hessischer Rundfunk. Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in the premiere of Mackey's *Pedal Tones*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through February 24. "Mackey's notes cite Bach and R&B organ music, but the sounds they more closely resemble are what you might hear as background on a TV soap opera" [Allan Ulrich, San Francisco Chronicle, 2/25/02].

*The Beata Moon Ensemble*. Columbia University, New York, NY.

February 23

*Catalyst: Peace Pieces in Violent Times*, with John Bischoff. Mills College, Oakland, CA.

College Music Society presents a discussion with Bernard Rands, plus Bruce Bennett's *Three Epigrams for Violin and Piano* and *Six Short Pieces on a Series of Pitches by Arnold Schoenberg*, Charles Nichols's *Epithalamion*, John Marvin's *Nocturne*, Deborah Kavash's *Nocturne*, John Hillebrandt's *Tango*, Helena Michelson's *Flute Enchanting*, and music from Mark Alburger's *Henry Miller in Brooklyn*. California State University - Stanislaus, Turlock, CA.

February 24

St. Petersburg Philharmonic in Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 2* and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Death of Leo Ornstein (b. 1892 or 93), at age 108 (possibly 109). Green Bay, WI. "Ornstein was recognized as a piano prodigy at an early age. He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory under Alexander Glazounov but in 1906 was forced to flee with his family to America where he studied at what would one day become the Juilliard School. He started giving concerts in 1911 and within a few years achieved notoriety, not only as a gifted pianist performing works of Debussy, Ravel, Scriabin, Schoenberg, and Bartók for the first time in the U.S., but also through performances of his own radical "futurist" compositions which created a furor. A biography

and analysis of his work was written by Frederick H. Martens when Ornstein was still in his twenties. He was internationally known as a virtuoso pianist, and as a composer he was ranked with Stravinsky and Schoenberg. In the mid-1920s, however, at the height of a successful concert career, he abruptly ceased performing. A few years later, together with his wife Pauline Mallet-Prevost, he formed a music school in Philadelphia where he taught until retiring in the mid 1950s. After that he devoted his time entirely to composing. His final work, an 8th Piano Sonata, was composed in 1990 when he was in his late 90s, making him perhaps the oldest active composer ever. That sonata and works from his early years will be performed by Marc-Andre Hamelin on March 26 in New York at Columbia's Miller Theater. Although best known for a collection of radical early works, throughout his life he wrote in diverse styles. Such stylistic eclecticism confounded his listeners which, in turn, may explain why he chose to retire from the concert stage in order to follow his muse away from public pressure and scrutiny. Having thus shunned the music world it is not surprising that the music world quickly began to ignore him, and as time passed most people forgot about him altogether. Then in the 1970s, along with a revival of interest in American music of the early part of the century, he was "rediscovered" and since then a dozen or more records have been produced and many more works have been published. In 1975 he received the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award from the National Academy of Arts and Letters and The National Institute of Arts and Letters. His music continues to be performed and recorded both in the U.S. and abroad, and a biography is currently being written by Michael Broyles and Denise Von Glahn. His manuscripts are held at the Yale Music Library; much of his music has been edited and published by his son under the imprimatur of Poon Hill Press. He is survived by his daughter Edith Valentine of De Pere, Wisconsin, his son, Severo Ornstein of Woodside, California, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren" [Press release, Ornstein family].

February 25

Premier of John Adams's *American Berserk*, plus his *China Gates*, performed by Garrick Ohlsson. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "*American Berserk* is the stylistic opposite of *China Gates*: jagged, relentless, harmonically spiky music with out-of-sync lines in block chords happening at once, like those crazy musical collages in Ives" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 2/17/02].

WNYC's board is presented a proposal that would limit classical music primarily to between 7pm and 5am, when there are the fewest listeners, with daytime programming of mostly news and talk. New York, NY "Before Sept. 11, WNYC presented nearly a full day of classical music to a cadre of loyal listeners, and it was one of only two mostly classical music stations in New York. The other is WQXR FM (96.3m www.wqxr.com), a commercial station owned by The New York Times Company" [The New York Times, 2/28/02].

February 27

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony, with Renée Fleming, in Strauss's *Four Last Songs* and the conductor's *Songs on Texts of Emily Dickinson*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through March 3.

February 28

*Composer Portraits: Julia Wolfe*, with Ensemble Sospeso. *Girlfriend*, *Mink Stole*, *my lips from speaking*, *Tell Me Everything*, and *The Vermeer Room*. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY

## Recordings

Adams Cox Fink Fox. [John Luther Adams. *Dark Wind*. Marty Walker. *Interlude 1. Interlude 2*. Michael Jon Fink. *Thread of Summer*. Rick Cox. *When April May*. Jim Fox. *Between the Wheels*]. Marty Walker, with Amy Knoles, Bryan Pezzone, Maria Newman, Peter Kent, Valaerie Dimond, Greg Gottlieb, and Dan Smith. Cold Blue.

Travis Baker. Sara Schoenbeck. *Yesca One* [Baker. 12341241. *Yesca One Seven*. Ellen Burr. *Cards #2. Cards #2*. Baker and Schoenbeck. *Blip. When One. Bungalow Hop. Extra Over. Rocky Clucks. Effervescing*]. Sara Schoenbeck, bassoon; Travis Baker, Bass. Spool.

Allison Cameron. *Ornaments* [Retablo. *Ornaments. Somatic Refrain. Three Shapes Of the Sword*]. Colleen Cook, Carol Fujima, Margaret Gay, Eve Egoyan, Allison Cameron, Gary Kulesha, Marc Sabat, Stephen Clarke, Ronda Ridone. Spool.

Joanne D. Carey. *Three Spanish Songs*. Pierrot Publishing.

Mark Carlson. *The Hall of Mirrors*. Pacific Serenades.

Eve de Castro-Robinson. *A Chaos of Delight*. Atoll.

*Character Sketches*. Nancy Kaplan Solomon, piano. Leonardo.

Paul Chihara. *Saxophone Concerto. Tree Music. Missa Carminum Brevis. Magnificat*. CRI.

*China Exchange*. CRI.

Gloria Coates. *Symphony No. 2. Homage to Van Gogh. Fragment from Leonardo's Notebooks "Anima della Terra." Time Frozen*. CPO.

*Cold Blue* [Smith. *Beatrix*. Marshall. *Gradual Siciliano (for Gus)*. Garland. *The Three Strange Angels*. Lentz. *You Can't See the Forest...Music*. Byron. *Marimbas in the Dorian Mode*. Fox. *Appearance of Red*. Mahler. *La Ciudad de Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles*. Miller. *Weddings, Funerals, and Children Who Cannot Sleep*. Kuhlman. *In This Light*. Cox. *Necessity*. Fink. *Celesta Solo*. Bowen and Budd. *Wonder's Edge*. Tenney. *Spectral CANON for CONLON Nancarrow*]. Cold Blue.

James Coleman. *Zuihitsu*. James Coleman, Theremin. Sedimental.

Rick Cox. *Maria Falling Away* [All the While Toward Us. *Maria Falling Away. Beige 2. The Years in Streams. Long Distance. All The While Toward Us II*]. Cold Blue.

Richard Danielpour. *An American Requiem* (2001). Pacific Symphony Orchestra, soloists and Chorale conducted by Carl St. Clair. Reference Recordings RR-97CD.

Michael Daugherty. *UFO* [*UFO. Motown Metal. Niagara Falls. Desi. Red Cape Tango*]. North Texas Wind Symphony, Evelyn Glennie. Klavier.

Philip Glass. *Philip On Film* (Secret Agent, Candyman, Orange Mountain Music). Conducted by Michael Riesman and Harry Rabinowitz, with the Kronos Quartet, English Chamber Orchestra, and Philip Glass Ensemble. Nonesuch 79660-2.

## Writers

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

GAVIN BORCHERT is a Seattle-based composer and writer.

MICHAEL DELLAIRA is a composer and lives in New York City. *Five*, a CD of his recent music has just been released by Albany Records, and Act I of his opera *Chéri* was recently given readings with both music-theater and opera casts under the auspices of The Center for Contemporary Opera at Lincoln Center. He is an associate editor of *New Music Connoisseur* and, since 1993, the Vice President of the American Composers Alliance, the oldest composer's service organization in the U.S.

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

JEFF DUNN is a freelance critic with a B.A. in music and a Ph.D. in Education. He is an avid collector of recorded performances of new music, a dedicated opera-goer, and a composer of piano and vocal music. His post-modernistic career has included stints as a ranger-naturalist, geologic explorationist, and geography professor. He now serves on the board of directors for New Music Forum and is a Bay Area correspondent for 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

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

MICHAEL MCDONAGH is a San Francisco-based poet and writer on the arts who has done two poem/picture books with artist Gary Bukovnik, *Before I Forget* (1991) and *Once* (1997), the former being in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Berkeley Art Museum, and the New York Public Library. 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.

Remembering the life of  
Patrica A. Hodge  
of Greenville, PA  
Singer, Musician,  
Teacher of Piano  
April 24, 1933 --  
February 25, 1998

"A woman who loved  
music of all kinds . . .  
classical, jazz, church  
hymns, rock-and-roll,  
Broadway show tunes,  
the spirited harmonies of  
the Andrews Sisters and  
the twang of bluegrass" --  
and, no doubt, the  
extraordinary works of  
composers of the 20th  
and 21st centuries

Bette Alburger, sister