

21ST CENTURY MUSIC

JANUARY 2004

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Doubletalk: Ten Years of 20th- and 21st-Century Music

PHILLIP GEORGE

GEORGE: Here we are in 2004 and *21ST-CENTURY MUSIC* publishes Volume 11, No. 1.

ALBURGER: Well, yes, we started ten years ago as 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC.

GEORGE: How did it happen?

ALBURGER: Multiple considerations came together fortuitously. While at Claremont Graduate University, as assistant to Roland Jackson, who published *Performance Practice Review*, I couldn't help noticing that I regularly came across such journals as *American Music*, *Early Music*, *Music Library Association Notes*, *The Musical Quarterly*, *Perspectives of New Music*, and *19th-Century Music*. I became increasingly concerned that there wasn't a monthly journal for contemporary-music composers, enthusiasts, musicologists, and theorists from around the world. For years, I had been asking people, "Where do you go to keep up with what's happening in new music?" The answers I would receive -- "I read *The New York Times*" -- "I read *The New Yorker*" -- never seemed sufficient. At the same time, during those Claremont years, I became familiar with music software programs, particularly *Encore* and *Finale*. When I returned home to write my dissertation, I printed up my earliest large-scale work, *The Twelve Fingers* piano suite. Upon showing the "published" work to several Southern California colleagues (Michael Boos and John Browning), the response was "Looks great. Can we be in your company?" I said, "Well, I really don't have a company, but if you join me, I guess I will!" The enterprise initially published under the moniker *Happy Music*, a name I had been using on my manuscripts for years, inspired by Robert Ashley's *Lovely Music*. Meanwhile I began working for Al and Doreen Burgin as Music Critic for their weekly newspaper *Commuter Times*, and would reprint articles in an occasional freebie *Happy Music News and Reviews*. A format evolved that would include calendar, chronicle (past events, in a Nicolas Slonimsky vein), comment, and opportunities sections. Then in a little more than a month, everything somehow came together. Two important concerts -- Terry Riley coaching a Mills College group (I was the oboist!) in new performance practices in the 30th anniversary of his great *In C*; and Ingram Marshall's *Fog Tropes II*, with the Kronos Quartet at Stanford -- were too far from the newspaper's Berkeley / Marin / San Francisco coverage area, but too important not to cover. So, for the first time (and, as it turned out, the last time, too!), HMNR covered concerts on its own. I looked at the issue and thought, "This is good enough to sell..." By this time, several of the growing number of Happy Music composers said, "Mark, we love being published by you, but lose the name! It sounds like kid's music." I thought it a sad commentary that joy was only associated with youth (and I loved the irony of publishing my *Aerial Requiem* under the appellation)!

The final element came together with my teaching at Dominican University, where I directed the first *NOW Music Festival*, with Deniz Ince (this was the direct descendent of an all-Bay-Area-composers *American Music Week* which I co-directed with Herbert Bielawa). We tried everything to get coverage, but in the end, only the editors of *Commuter Times* came through, so it was that point that I took matters into my own hands. I reprinted Doreen Burgin's review and supplemented it by hiring Molly Axtmann Schrag to write up the remaining concerts (this was the first and just about the last time any writer was paid)! Thanks to some research at the Menlo Park Copyright and Patent Library, I learned that, astoundingly enough, neither *New Music* nor 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC were being used. While more deserving concerns should have snapped up the names, there they were, so a "chapterectomy" from my dissertation, plus *Commuter Times* and *American Music Week* reviews, and the "departments" that had evolved, along with publications and recordings listings, became the first bona fide issue of 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC.

GEORGE: But that was Volume 1, No. 12, was it not?

ALBURGER: Right! We just couldn't wait until January 1995 to publish, although, ironically, it soon became standard practice in the Journal to run at a two-month lag, so the November 1-3, 1994 NOW Festival really could have waited. So in our enthusiasm to publish, we had to come out with December 1994, but even in the heat of the moment I realized that it would be awfully tedious to calculate issue volumes and numbers down the years with a Volume 1, No. 1 in December -- hence the No. 12, for ease of calculation. Besides, this also suggested a going concern, instead of looking like a total greenhorn publication of No. 1 or avoiding numeration at all, as Hugh Hefner did in his first issue.

GEORGE: Interesting analogy.

ALBURGER: Total co-incidence. I've also thought of the young John Kennedy's George, which began at about the same time as 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC, but was much more heralded and worlds better financed. And, sadly, did not much survive its founder.

GEORGE: Interesting situation. How did you publish?

ALBURGER: I drew on my daughter Crystal's Kid-Pics computer drawing program an abstract based on Pablo Picasso's 1920 portrait of Igor Stravinsky. The front material and page layouts were a composite of just about all of the journals to which I referred earlier. Then we xeroxed a couple of hundred copies on a Sharp Copier at First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael, where I worked as music director. I dutifully recorded the number of "personal" copies made (they were supposed to charge me, but I'm not sure they ever did)!

Then we sent free copies out (with subscription cards enclosed) to every composer, Ivy League School, and University of California in the Dominican University and our address books! The first issue was only half-serious (at least in my mind, to save face if it didn't take off) -- but the response among my Dominican colleagues was very positive and totally serious, and among the first ten to mail in subscription checks (it was an astoundingly cheap \$24 for 12 issues back then) was Harvard University! It was at that moment that I knew we really had something; I shouted for joy at the San Anselmo post office, and must have come off as quite the eccentric.

GEORGE: You do anyway.

ALBURGER: Thanks a lot. But there was a downside to the Harvard subscription. They said, "Send all back issues."

GEORGE: What did you do?

ALBURGER: Sent back issues, of course! They were pretty much extant, but simply under the name Happy Music News and Reviews. So the titles were changed and dutifully sent out. Even I had to admit that the old name would never have garnered the many academic subscriptions we have now!

GEORGE: So 20TH-CENTURY MUSIC burst Athena-like into an unsuspecting world!

ALBURGER: Interesting analogy.

GEORGE: But one aspect, which now seems central to the journal, did not appear immediately: the interview.

ALBURGER: Right! That first interview published under your name, with Augusta Read Thomas in the February 1995 issue. And then the double interview that I held with Anthony Davis and Tod Machover the next month. By and large, the idea is that interviews are face-to-face, with questions freely emerging out of the conversation. In interviews and reviews, if there's an editorial policy at all, it has something to do with being composers' advocates.

GEORGE: This seems true, even in your more formal interviews, as with Ali Akbar Khan in May 1995.

ALBURGER: That was probably an important encounter on two counts. First, to emphasize that the journal was about 20th-century music, with as little ideological axe to grind as possible (relatedly, the Chronicle section can deal with any style of music, as long as it has been written or significantly realized from 1900 on). And secondly, the Khan interview was the first one where extensive revisions were requested -- pointing out the notion that while an interview is real, it is, in another way, a fantasy.

GEORGE: Interesting. There are those that find the Interviews and Chronicle the most important sections of the Journal.

ALBURGER: And there are those that have found one or the other the least engaging, too! But, by and large, the reception has been mostly gratifying.

GEORGE: Including the *Notes* review of the November 1995 issue *20TH-CENTURY MUSIC*.

ALBURGER: That was a pretty good issue to evaluate -- ethnomusical and recording articles by David Bundler and Michael Dellaira, respectively; and interviews with Lou Harrison and Pauline Oliveros.

GEORGE: And in the years that followed [reading from Index to *20TH-CENTURY MUSIC*], interviews with Charles Amirkhanian, Robert Ashley, William Bolcom, Pierre Boulez, Henry Brant, Earle Brown, David Cope, George Crumb, Andrew Culver, Peter Maxwell Davies, Lukas Foss, Philip Glass, David Harrington, Alan Hovhaness, Meyer Kupferman, Joan La Barbara, Libby Larsen, Benjamin Lees, Alvin Lucier, Steve Mackey, Conlon Nancarrow, Kent Nagano, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Christopher Rouse, Frederick Rzewski, Harvey Solberger, "Blue" Gene Tyranny, and Pamela Z.

ALBURGER: I've been pleased to be a part of it.

GEORGE: Any regrets?

ALBURGER: Oh, sure. There are plenty more that still need to be interviewed, for starts!

GEORGE: What of the change to 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC?

ALBURGER: Initially we had hoped to change the name of the monthly, and continue a quarterly with the old name. As it turned out, running one journal was plenty enough. We changed the name of the monthly with the January 2000 issue (going with the populist, rather than the purist notion of the millenium).

GEORGE: Has there been any change of coverage since then?

ALBURGER: While we still welcome coverage of anything from 1900 on, the focus is inevitably shifting toward the future!

GEORGE: Non-answer. You could have been a politician.

ALBURGER: Don't get me started.

GEORGE: But you are a composer, as well as Editor-Publisher.

ALBURGER: Well, we better not get started there, either. A fair number of chamber works, 4 concerti (eventually around 16), 2 masses, 16 operas, 2 piano suites, 7 song cycles, 8 (eventually going on 9) symphonies. Keeps me out of any more trouble than I'm already in....

Concert Reviews

Afternoon Delights

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony in Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, Kurt Weill's *Violin Concerto*, and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*. November 6, Davies Hall, San Francisco Symphony, CA.

Symphony matinee audiences from San Francisco to New York do not exactly have reputations for welcoming non-traditional repertory with open ears. But that didn't stop SFS guest conductor David Robertson from presenting an all-20th-century program on the afternoon of November 6 that was warmly received. The three featured works each found their composers in transition, and intriguing comparisons were suggested.

Steve Reich's *Different Trains* (1988/2001) is different enough from the run-of-the-mill to require a string orchestra disported as a quartet of string ensembles. Originally conceived for the Kronos Quartet, augmented by three taped renditions of the same, the orchestration here was still surprisingly lithe, with the exception of the cello motive that opens Part III of this three-part tour-de-force. As in the original version, taped voices of American and European Holocaust era personages are assembled into a telling whole -- at once episodic yet archly impressive. Reich masterfully translates the music of the human voice into kicky and haunting leitmotifs of energy and pathos.

If *Different Trains* found its composer in mid-career (connecting his early avant-garde taped-voice work with his later, more populist, concerns for ensemble hocketing and incipient multi-media music drama), Kurt Weill's *Violin Concerto* entails a related transition -- that of a young creator finding his voice amidst the crowd. Weill was enough of an innovator, even in this early work (1924), to score for an orchestra of winds, percussion, and string bass (although certainly such instrumental assemblages were "in the air" at the time). While the composition resonates with the influences of such greats as Igor Stravinsky and Paul Hindemith, this piece is clearly finding its own style. And what a wonderful advocate was violinist James Ehnes, who carried on with commitment and rhetorical flourish in a composition which tantalizingly suggests Weill's later tunefulness in *The Threepenny Opera*.

Stravinsky was the third element in this one-two-three punch, with Davidson socking it to the listeners in the disarmingly neoclassically titled *Symphony in Three Movements* (1945) There are elements of the elemental in this large essay that hearken back to the composer's salad years of *The Rite of Spring*. Like the earlier volley, this one is modular, disjointed, powerful, raucous, overlain with a stern, impersonal veneer. But now Stravinsky is looking not only backwards but ahead, in angular lines that suggest the serial cudgels he would take up upon the death of his long-time rival (and fellow Los Angeles resident at the time), Arnold Schoenberg.

All this a bit much for a matinee? Not really. What the audience was left with was plangent woodwinds, ringing horns, punchy percussion, and rhapsodic strings -- musical entertainment pure and simple and meaningful.

Shedding Light on "Night"

MARK ALBURGER

Goat Hall Productions presents Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* (book by Hugh Wheeler). November 7, Goat Hall, San Francisco Symphony, CA. Through November 23.

Stephen Sondheim carries on a lineage that may be traced back to Arthur Sullivan and W.A. Mozart. As in the former, words are often arguably more important than music, the sounds simply setting off witty verbal interplay. And, reflecting the Viennese master, craftsmanship is refined, with a high level of inevitability. The music keeps within certain stylistic boundaries and delivers according to stereotypical norms.

While this is all quite admirable, it may suffice to explain why Sondheim has never exactly been on this critic's "A" list. But at least he's moved up to the "B," thanks to a wonderful presentation of *A Little Night Music* on November 7 at Goat Hall Productions in San Francisco.

Director Harriet March Page has assembled a winning cast that pops with energy and delivers the songs with the resonance of opera, rather than the belts of certain Broadway renditions. And opera is what Sondheim needs, because he's a credible enough composer whose works merit first rate vocal delivery.

This was certainly the case with the lead singers here. Never have I heard a "Send in the Clowns" as poignantly or excellently delivered than by Natalie Wilson, in the role of Desiree Armfeldt. Her performance brought many in the audience to tears, and capped an evening of musical and dramatic highs.

Robert Benda once again demonstrated his shining presence as actor and singer, in the challenging role of Henrik, which requires him at one point to sing while playing the cello (miming to a pre-recorded one). And Cameron Weston and Gina Silverman were winningly appealing in their portrayals of Frederik and Anne, capturing (as the other players here) the magic not always apparent in the printed page.

Brian M. Rosen served double duty as music director (with fine pianist support from founding music director Dave Hurlbert) and Carl-Magnus, the blustery sexist, and brought polish to both tasks. His dramatic counterpart, Diana Landau, found the right balance in the tricky role of Charlotte, scoring the most laughs of the evening and vocal finesse as well.

Marcia St. Clair, as Madame Armfeldt, and Carolyn Zola, as Petra, delivered convincing renditions of fine songs. They were aided and abetted by Sandra Castleberry (Fredrika), Regan Richey (Frid), and Jane Goldsmith (Malla). The intriguing quintet of Sarah Hutchinson, Maggie Tenenbaum, Deborah Hahn, Douglas Mandell, and Dale Murphy kept the proceedings bubbling along.

Dean Loumbas's choreography, Dale MacDonald's lighting, Greg DeLory's set design, and costumes and props by Miriam Lewis and Victoria Holder all contributed to a big *Night Music*.

Hit Woman at San Francisco Opera

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Opera in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk*. November 9, War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco Symphony, CA. Through November 22. Reviewed November 17.

Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk* was the hit woman of the San Francisco Opera (November 9 through 22) in two ways. Not only did she bump off three characters in the course of the evening, but these performances may be the finest of the season

This Shostakovich opera was a hit in its opening run, too, with 180 performances in Leningrad and Moscow before official condemnation by Josef Stalin. And totalitarian censure it certainly deserved, as this is the kind of work that a dictator could fear: personal over political; ambiguous rather than didactic; sexy and vulgar. It's far from the composer's most radical piece. Insofar as opera is concerned, that honor would go to *The Nose*, which grunts, snorts, and wheezes (it's about a nose, after all). By contrast, though *Lady* is raucous and sardonic, there is plenty of beautiful singing

Much of this goes to the heroine, or anti-heroine depending on the perspective, Katarina Ismailov. Solveig Kringelborn brought a beautiful musical and visual presence to the role -- entrancing. Against her, most of the male characters are only so much "tragi-sardonic" (Shostakovich's adjective) bluster. Christopher Ventris, as Katerina's womanizing lover Sergei, was an able match for Kringelborn in power and energy. The roles of Katerina's father-in-law and husband were ably dispatched by Vladimir Vaneev and Vsevolod Grivnov. Ann Panagulias shone as much as she could in the smaller part of the maid Aksinya, as did Jane Dutton in her portrayal of Katerina's Act IV rival Sonyetka. Far from shabby, Howard Haskin turned in a polished comic turn with his Shabby Peasant, and the Russian keystone cops routines were led with comic aplomb by Nikita Storojev

There shouldn't be much to like in this shabby libretto, where just about every male personage is a cad and the leading woman, while initially strong, turns out to be a victim as well; yet everything is, due to the bumptious and sumptuous music. Shostakovich, in his rehabilitation following the censure of *MacBeth*, changed only a mere whit of his style -- he simply stayed clear of opera and politics by concentrating on instrumental music. Boon to the symphony and string quartet repertoires, but bane for music drama enthusiasts

As it is, the orchestral writing is strong here, of course. And conductor Donald Runnicles, who is becoming the grand old man of the San Francisco Opera (in experience and excellence, rather than age), makes the most of every moment. The banda (onstage musicians, in this case a brass band) in this production is clothed as a military unit and functions as an instrumental Greek chorus, present onstage at key moments, including the bedroom scene! Yes, there are those famous descending trombone glissandi, enough to shock Stalin all by themselves, but there is so much more beautiful and exciting music that there's plenty to offend dozens of demagogues

The physical production featured swooping geometrical shapes; a tromp l'oeil, distorted perspective, upthrusting aperture (for the basement scenes and elsewhere); and a bleak, planimetric, photographic Siberian visual. It almost added up. But in the end, it was the singing and the music that carried the night, and tyrants trembled

Record Reviews

Daniel Boom

MARK ALBURGER

Daniel Adams. *Shadow On Mist* [Isorhythmic Concerto. Three Movements for Unaccompanied Marimba. Alloy. Ambience. Lignumvitae. Shadow on Mist. Stratum. Tow Antiphonal Portraits].

Imagine a minimalist collision with Alan Hovhaness and Edgar Varèse. That would give you some idea of where Daniel Adams is in *Shadow On Mist* [Capstone], a delightful album of wind and percussion music, mostly the latter.

The collisions start out in *Isorhythmic Concerto* for percussion solo and wind ensemble. The strident brass and percussion motives have that Varesian edge, but with ritual repetitive schemes that modernize the medieval. An interior saxophone section brings jazz into the mix -- initially no more or less so than Varèse -- but further enriched with suggestions of swing in percussion and bass.

Three Movements for Unaccompanied Marimba is the earliest work in the collection, and sounds it, as an example of classic modernism. Alloy, for a metallic percussion trio of glockenspiel, chimes, and vibraphone returns to that more mystical Hovhanessian/Reichian world suggested earlier. But it is often very still, suggesting Messiaen and points farther east, albeit in fairly chromatic contexts.

Adams is definitely a fan of like-timbred percussion -- all indefinite woods for *Isorhythmic Concerto*, all metal for Alloy, and virtually all-wind chime (no less than 35 sets!) for Ambience. This is a wonderful piece that cuts out a strong character for itself, evoking rainforest and rapture. Three alarming blown conch shells put this over the top as music worthy of many returns.

Returning to all wood (with the addition of definite-pitched instruments) in *Lignumvitae* for marimba, xylophone, temple blocks, log drum, wood block, claves, guiro, and rain stick -- a related tropical feel is evoked, but much more nervous monkeys on uppers, occasionally doing sambas. With *Shadow on Mist* we can safely conclude that Daniel Adams has the academia-meets-the-orient number nailed down in an evocative work of much interest for flute and percussion ensemble. There's a bit of the ecstasy of Boulez and Takemitsu in the big cymbal swashes.

Stratum, for four marimbas, is the second earliest work, and again sounds it, in expanding the compositional pallet of *Three Movements* to encompass a Crumbian motorism and a nice thrashy attitude at times, encompassing various rhythmic twists. The concluding *Two Antiphonal Portraits* are an exciting tour-de-force, often feverish and always engaging -- with big-bang jungle Shostakovich conclusion.

Cold Compressed

MARK ALBURGER

The Complete 10-Inch Series from Cold Blue: Peter Garland, Rick Cox, Barney Childs, Daniel Lentz, Read Miller, Michael Jon Fink, Chas Smith. Cold Blue.

Amazing! A Cold Blue collection with a program booklet, and occasional notes! The usual high-quality sound and art work, of course, in *The Complete 10-Inch Series from Cold Blue*. But this time we get a little background on works by Peter Garland, Rick Cox, Barney Childs, Daniel Lentz, Read Miller, Michael Jon Fink, and Chas Smith -- since this is a CD reissue set of a series of 10-inch vinyl records from 1982 and 83.

We learn, for instance, that Peter Garland's *Matachin Dances* refer to "the matachine dance [which] continues in popularity as a folk dance throughout Mexico and most of the American Southwest, especially among Indians. In the 450 years since the conquest of Mexico, forms of the matchine have diffused and changed, blending, perhaps, with native dances dating from pre-Spanish times which were similar to it" [Bernard L. Fontana, *The Material World of the Tarahumara*]. Garland, a US expatriate, residing in Mexico finds antique, lyrical, and violent minimalism in gourd rattles and two violins to striking effects.

Michael Jon Fink's music, which shares the disk serves as gentle counterpoint to the above in the delicate Two Pieces for Piano Solo and Piano Solo that breath a Cageian medieval air. To this is added Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick's plangent cello in *Vocalise* -- simply lovely in its delicate duo with Duncan Goodrich's soulful pianism. And the concluding Veil for Two Pianos (where Goodrich is joined by the composer) is a pleasure from beginning to end.

Likewise it is a pleasure to hear Barney Child's *Clay Music*, as performed by Susan Rawcliffe, Lisette Rabinow, Georgia Alwan, and Scott Wildinson on space whistles, transverse flute, tuba flutes, small necklace ocarinas, middle-sized ocarinas (in E and C), bass ocarina, pipes, Aztec pipes, double pipe, and triple pipes. Wow! Space whistles! Tuba flutes!

Again, the pairing is intriguing: this second disk concludes with text-pieces by the appropriately-named Read Miller, read in conjunction with Janyce Collins and Rick Cox on *Mile Zero Hotel*, a series of sonic postcards with the laconic ritornello "Love, Miriam," starting out at (but not necessarily continuing thereon from) Mile Zero of the Alaskan Highway at Dawson Creek, Canada. Miller reads in a similar solo style in *The Blueprint of a Promise*.

If you've felt that the promising sounds of pedal steel guitar and 12-string dobro deserve more consideration, then Chaz Smith's *After, Santa Fe, October '68*, and *Scircura* will fit the bill. The first could be an intro hook to a pop song, but instead of quick abandonment in favor of stereotypical vocals, we have a nice 3-minute meander that lingers in the mind. *Santa Fe* is more mysterious hearts of space; *October '68* a kind of spiritual Hawaiian transfiguration. Aloha Amen. *Scircura* is a minimalist ostinato of the John Cage do-it-until-you-get-it school, with gently accruing textures.

Rick Cox takes other evocative paths in *These Things Stop Breathing* and *Taken from Real Life*, in prepared electric guitar and whispery voice, assisted by clarinetist Marty Walker. The latter selection makes for attention-grabbing eerie and eerie listening.

Daniel Lentz beautiful spirals complete the collection, beginning with the heavenly voices of Joanne Christensen, Arlene Flynn Dunlap, Richard Dunlap, and Garry Eister, accompanied by the composers cascading echo system. In *Slow Motion Mirror, Midnight White*, and *Solar Cadences* the results are like pop angels ascending, and the musics lift the spirits in spirited cyclic entertainment. A demented nirvana. The concluding *Dancing on the Sun* contains more ecstatic, lovely Lentzisms, now from A.F. Dunlap as pianist as well as poppy multi-tracked vocalist, with the composer continuing the cascades.

Suspended Sanctuary, Indeed!

MARK ALBURGER

Deep Listening Band. *Sanctuary* [*Invocation. Hi Bali, Hi, Processional. Sanctuary. Non-Stop Flight*]. Stuart Dempster, Pauline Oliveros, David Gamper. Mode.

Deep Listening Band and Long String Instrument. *Suspended Music* [Pauline Oliveros. *Epigraphs in the Time of AIDS*. Ellen Fullman. *TexasTravelTexture*]. Stuart Dempster, Pauline Oliveros, David Gamper, Ellen Fullman, Elise Gould, Nigel Jacobs. Periplum.

Do not attempt to control your stereo. For the next hour or two, the Deep Listening Band will be in control and you will be transported to other worlds. Pauline Oliveros, Stuart Dempster, and David Gamper define a drone-based, steady-state, trance form of minimalism sprung from La Monte Young. The music of *Sanctuary* (Mode) and *Suspended Music* (Periplum, with Long String Instrument) delights and defies expectations -- soothing yet stimulating, sacred and secular, esoteric and earthy. Julie Lyon Balliet contributes further wonders with her voice in the opening *Invocation*, against soaring trombone and sustains reminiscent of sho.

Deep Listening is a sensibility as much as a style. The Band regularly performs in the Sanctuary of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Kingston, New York. Some pieces, including *Invocation* and *Processional* call for movement (here by Balliet and Dempster) about the sonic space. Others, such as *Hi Bali, Hi* and *Sanctuary* involve Gamper's Expanded Instrument System sound processing environment, which allows each performer to access to individual delay and ambiance processors, microphones, signal routing and mixing, and a computer controller activated by foot pedals and switches -- for arresting and bewitching effects. The latter composition is particularly ominous in its dense rich sustains, reinforced by dijeridoo and filigreed by accordion. The trombone and squeeze-box sound processing at times comes as much from sanatoriums and space ships as much as sanctuaries. Some of the microtonality almost recalls Harry Partch and there's an Alan Hovhaness blues motive in trombone that is quite haunting.

A classic *Non-Stop Flight* features Balliet and Thomas Buckner (voices), Joe McPhee (bass clarinet and pocket trumpet), Margarit Shenker (just-tuned accordion and voice), Nego Gato and Carol Chappell (Brazilian percussion), Jason Finkleman (Brazilian and found percussion), and Women Who Drum (Leaf Miller, djembe; Lorraine Demerest and Judith Muldoon, congas, shekere, bells). In this "inviting environment for intercultural improvisation[, a]ll of the performers not engaged in a solo or ensemble keep a low threshold of sound-making alive with smaller instruments for the duration of the piece. Solos and ensembles emerge from the gentle web of sound leading to the full ensemble of thirteen players' mixture of styles, as represented here by the excerpt from the two hour performance." We are left hungry for more.

With the addition of Brazilian percussion here, we expect more rhythmic sections, and we are not disappointed. The results are some lovely kind of intercultural new-age tribal minimalism. Jon Hassel and Bitches Brew come to mind in the languid pocket trumpet moments, and the Buckner/Balliet vocals are stunning.

Suspended Music finds the Band joined by Ellen Fullman's Long String Instrument -- 175 stretched strings suspended at waist height. The visual effect is that of being inside a giant piano, where one must walk among the strings to make the sounds. The musical effect is further deepening as the music evolves in Oliveros's *Epigraphs in the Time of Aids* and Fullman's *TexasTravelTexture*. The bluesy (sorry, just-tuned) accordion weaves in and out of dark voices, lonely, somber. The blues trombone / whale song connection is made (Hovhaness again?) and the long strings are capable of some strikingly short, tinkly sounds. Overtone flutes skitter about in descending whole tones against open fifths. Sona evocations skyrocket.

Another Dellaira Delight

MARK ALBURGER

Michael Dellaira. *Five* [*The Stranger, Grief. USA Stories. Three Rivers. This World Is Not Conclusion. Colored Stones*]. Slovak Radio Orchestra, Cantori New York. Albany.

Michael Dellaira has been associated with the *Derriere Garde*, and so it is not a total surprise to hear his lush, sonorous sensibilities in *Five* on Albany Records. This is no mere rehash of the past, however. Dellaira knows where we've been (and where he's been, which includes guitar-playing, song-writing, and work at Princeton with Milton Babbitt, Edward T. Cone, and Paul Lansky), and he's going on. *The Stranger, Grief* has touches of minimalism and popular sensibilities allied to romanticism and rapture, for results both beautiful and moving. "Here comes the enemy, a stranger," but how can we fear when the coming is so transporting? Michael Nyman works in similar ways.

Nyman, however, has not had it both ways -- as in writing a piece that can be perceived as either a musical or an opera, which is the case with Dellaira's *Cherie*, from which *The Stranger, Grief* is drawn. However, in this gorgeous performance by mezzo-soprano Rannveig Braga and the Slovak Radio Orchestra under the direction of Joel Eric Suben, there is no question that this rendition falls on the Metropolitan, rather than Broadway, side of the stage.

Moving to the concert hall, *USA Stories* (from John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*) has a decided Randall Thompson update edge -- perhaps natural in the context of choral music -- until the fun, driving, soaring third selection, "The Campers at Kitty Hawk." Related sensibilities are gathered in Dellaira's four Emily Dickinson settings collected as *This World Is Not Conclusion*, in consort with exciting and lovely post-minimalist string writing.

Also moving are *Three Rivers*, specifically the Mohawk, Sligo, and Meander -- which, while based on fragments of Dellaira's guitar music from the 60's, sound all the world like Heraclitian minimalism. You can never step into the same composition twice.

With *Colored Stones*, impressively performed by baritone Chris Pedro Trakas and pianist Jennifer Peterson, Dellaira initially touches upon a world not-unlike that of Erling Wold, of soaring vocals over animated accompaniments. He finds a sensitive lyricism as well, and the nine geographical movements (Athens, Houston, Albufeira, Woodstock, Siracusa, Wiscasset, Tours, Bryce Canyon, Cozumel, Camden), based on poetry of Richard Howard, are another Dellaira delight.

Sex, Sounds, and Rocco(co?)

MARK ALBURGER

Rocco Di Pietro. *Anoxia*. Di Pietro Editions.

Rocco Di Pietro. *The Glass Case of the Heart's Fragility*. Di Pietro Editions.

Rocco Di Pietro. *Tears of Eros*. Di Pietro Editions.

Sex! Simultaneity! Sound! Rocco Di Pietro has three concerns in three recent albums -- *Anoxia*, *The Glass Case of the Heart's Fragility*, and *Tears of Eros*. The first is a very short (for a CD at least) combo, the simultaneous recording of the composer's 1973 *Air Piece* (feverish chromatic pianistic minimalism from Julius Eastman, overlain by Juli Di Pietro's air pipe and Rocco's Moog Sonic V) set against the more recent text-piece *Anoxia* (1999).

Glass Case takes a similar shorter tack (6:33) in another 1973-99 synthesis: *Clockscape* (clocks, mandolin with triangle beater and pitch pipes from Di Pietro, with Eastman performing on piano keys and strings) vs. the title cut.

Tears of Eros (Torso Version B / 2000) erases the dichotomies of past and present with a more blended approach to sound and text. What could be a more appropriate accompaniment for recitations (by Barbara Adams and Rocco Di Pietro) of George Bataille's *Guilty* and Sam Mangwana's *Life* than a sound collage of erotic sounds, tuning forks, and computer-processed synthesized sound? Stimulating, to say the least. Ooh, oh, ah. Impressive, memorable, and powerful. "What are we looking for in this world? We don't know."

Dresher for Success

MARK ALBURGER

Paul Dresher. *Dark Blue Circumstance*. New Albion.

These days, Paul Dresher is probably best known for his work with his Electro-Acoustic Band, but he's a heck of a composer and performer in other contexts as well, and has been for many years. His New Albion release *Dark Blue Circumstance* is chock full of good ideas, beginning with *Double Ikat*, for violin, piano, and percussion, as performed by the commissioning Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio. This work clearly shows Dresher's connections to Lou Harrison and eastern musics, as well as more typical pop and post-minimalist concerns.

The title cut, for electric guitar and live tape processing, is rich with unexpected effects including Balinese harpsichording, ominous Glassian thirds, and art-rock improvisations. *Channels Passing* is a rich, Reichian *Music for 13 Instruments*. *Night Songs* is in a similar vein, with electrifying vocal contributions from Thomasa Eckert, John Duykers, and Rinde Eckert, and athletic grace from such instrumentalists as trombonist Stuart Dempster and percussionist Mathew Kocmierski. The work is in four movements, and the concluding "Dawn Music" is a particular stunner, which can rank among the best minimalist works of the late 70's. Worthy of repeated listenings.

Deep Stringy

MARK ALBURGER

Duo Renard. *The Deeper Magic: Music from 20th Century America for Violin and Viola -- Fink, Cleary, Hansen, Martinu* [Bohuslav Martinu. *Duo No. 2*. Ted Hansen. *Mirrors*. Myron Fink. *Six Miniatures*. David Cleary. *The Deeper Magic*]. Duo Renard (Mark Miller, violin, and Ute Miller, viola). Musicians Showcase.

Smaller is often not easier. Composing or performing a work for only two string players is quite a challenge. Fortunately Duo Renard (Mark Miller, violin, and Ute Miller, viola) are up to all challenges in *The Deeper Magic* (Musicians Showcase), beginning with Bohuslav Martinu's impulsive, rapid, and virtuosic *Duo No. 2*. The first and third movement perpetual motions find a crossover between the baroque and contemporary that is quite impressive.

Ted Hansen finds gentler, more solemn tasks for the performers in *Mirrors*, reflecting well on the duo's strengths of line and tone. Myron Fink thinks both large and small in *Six Miniatures* by buying into grand structural models of the past, ending with a bravura "Vivo, Brillante," very neobaroque.

The Deeper Magic, by David Cleary, is deeper stuff, indeed. Beginning "Very slowly -- ferocious, intense, passionate" it becomes "Very fast -- frantic, with fire and intensity," living up to every adjective. Béla Bartók and George Rochberg smile from the wings, as Cleary again and again demonstrates his idiomatic command of the resources at hand.

Umwangedwa

MARK ALBURGER

Michal George. *Umwangedwa: Contemporary South African Guitar Music* [Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph. *Five African Sketches*. Darius Brubeck. *The Maskanda*. Carl van Wyk. *Three Dances*. David Hewitt. *Three Pieces*. Malcolm Forsyth. *Intimacies*]. Michal George, guitar. Ingududu Productions (Ingududu@aol.com).

Guitarist Michal George has produced an important album with the mouthful title *Umwangedwa: Contemporary South African Guitar Music* (Ingududu) -- the Zulu "evoking the loneliness and nostalgia felt by people who leave their native homes for far off lands," certainly felt by expatriate George, on the faculty of Muskingum College in Ohio [Ohio!].

He begins this impressive album with Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph's dark and light *Five African Sketches*, commissioned by the South African Musical Rights Organization (SAMRO). Particularly striking is the concluding "Township Tonight," based intriguingly on "America" from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, but given a kewla -- or township jazz, -- tweak, in this concluding picture of "a day in the life of Soweto."

This is followed by *The Maskanda* (a KwaZulu Natal group which has developed a distinctive guitar-playing style) by Darius Brubeck, son of Dave, the seminal cool jazz composer-pianist. Darius delivers with another SAMRO commission that again has a very striking conclusion -- the fourth-movement "and he makes people laugh," with charming ostinati and cagey Vivaldi reference.

Continuing in the vein of very effective finale movements, Carl van Wyk offers in *Three Dances* an arresting and, well, vigorous *Vigoro*, full of catchy asymmetrical rhythms and pungent harmonies. Van Wyk cites the influence of Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Bartók, Britten, Shostakovich, and Copland -- blending all into a cogent whole.

Abandoning the best for last principle, David Hewitt gets right down to business in *Three Pieces* with "The Mischief Maker," with a nice crossover jazz-classical feel that evokes a solo out of the Paul Winter Consort taken to new realms. The gentle, soulful "Where the Heart Is" serves wonderfully as contrast, concluding with "An African Lullaby," which George makes sound easy (it's probably not).

Malcolm Forsyth's *Intimacies* ups the ante, with George joined by clarinetist Laura Sabo and violis Michael Holub in a sparkling and surprising opening "Prologue." The three interior movements highlight respectively clarinet, guitar, and viola. After the bravura opening movement, these three selections are intimate, indeed -- Chamber music with a capital C. The music is filled with craft and intelligence, and at the same time artlessly clear. The "Epilogue" wraps things up in recapitulation.

Throughout George's playing is sensitive and virtuosic. His choice of composers and performers seems like a musical family one would like to get to know better via repeated visits. He honors his homeland in these telling portraits.

Intrusions and the Fury

MARK ALBURGER

Newband. *Harry Partch. Dean Drummond* [Harry Partch. *Eleven Intrusions. Dark Brother.* Dean Drummond. *Before the Last Laugh. Congressional Record*]. Newband. Innova.

Dean Drummond is keeping the Harry Partch flame afire and lighting up one for future generations in his recent release with his ensemble Newband, on Innova. He begins with the crazy quilt that is *Eleven Intrusions*, several movements of which ("Two Studies," "The Street," "Vanity," and "Cloud Chamber Music") were previously recorded on Partch's own Gate 5 label. The instrumental performances on this new album are true to the original and well-recorded, but of course, nobody does Partch vocals like Partch, although Robert Osbourne brings a related spirit -- rich, rather than raspy; refined, rather than wasted. The performance of "The Street," with a text by Willard Motley that is so quintessentially Partchian, finds its own integrity, and even a bit of that old hobo humor and sardonic malice. "Cloud Chamber Music" seems a skotch faster in this rendition, with a fuller adapted viola tone, the vocals electrifying -- not bad choices! No, let's go further: very good choices!

Dark Brother, the other featured Partch work, is performed in its revised version -- the original scoring for voice, adapted viola, chromelodeon (its first compositional usage), and kithara supplemented by the very present bass marimba. Dark and creepy -- whooo! Osbourne catches that accented petulance in his voice that Partch had down so well.

Drummond himself buys into microtonality, but he's no Partch clone, that's for sure. *Before the Last Laugh* rollicks along its own path in a wild combination of flute, cello, synthesizer, Partch's harmonic canons, and Drummond's own instrumental invention zoomoozophone -- a 31-toned howler. There's a jazz gallop spirit and plenty of anarchic energy to keep things interesting. Don't play it loud late at night, or you'll wake the neighbors.

Congressional Record plays into the Partch narrative tradition, and is closer to the old master's instrumentarium, too -- adapted guitar I, chromelodeon I, harmonic canons, diamond marimba, and bamboo marimba -- augmented by electronic wind controller and zoomoozophone. After all, why not? The Mannheimers had no copyright on the nascent symphony orchestra, right? So for a living musical tradition, new music for the old (even if the old instruments were only invented circa 1940-60...).

Songs from Invisible Days

MARK ALBURGER

Andrew Shapiro. *Invisible Days* [Airbox. Blueblack. Richard Serra. Moon's Reflection]. Andrew Shapiro / Airbox Music. www.andrewshapiro.com.

Andrew Shapiro is on whatever path he chooses to take in *Invisible Days* (Shapiro/Airbox). He's got the minimalist licks -- or, wait, are those pop riffs? Doesn't matter. The music is full of intelligence and very engaging. Beautiful and spiritual, too. The vernacular vocals (female, lamentably uncredited in this advance copy, by now tardy in review) are sensuous and beguiling, attractively whispering on the edge.

Philip Glass's *Songs from Liquid Days* comes to mind, but Shapiro is an update, and one seemingly equally poised for the concert hall, movie soundtrack, or club date. Put this on, and all's right for the future of music, in whatever direction you're heading.

Somehow He Can

MARK ALBURGER

Alvin Singleton. *Somehow We Can* [*Somehow We Can. Vous Compra. Mookestueck. Again*]. Tzadik.

Integrity is a word that just leaps to mind when listening to the music of Alvin Singleton -- it just sounds so right. The titular work (1995) in *Somehow We Can* (Tzadik) is dedicated to Marion Anderson and played by the like-named string quartet. It is a work that buzzes like the George Crumb Black Angels, but in ways beautiful and urgent. A chorale/hymn that appears down the line carries the music heavenward, albeit briefly before the buzzing begins beyond. There's a little strident Stravinsky in the mix, too. And enough silences to keep one breathless. *Vous Compra* (2001) is a totally different animal and the most recent piece, so it will be interesting to hear where Singleton turns next. Trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith and pianist Anthony Davis are the performers, and given both's improvisational talents, perhaps co-inspirators as well.

Music Review

Dmitri Dmitry: A Little Waltz Music

MARK ALBURGER

Dmitry Paperno. *Two Pieces for Piano [A Little Poem. Waltz-Scherzo]*. J.S. Sato Music Editions.

The first name seems to be a key clue in describing Dmitry Paperno's recent *Two Pieces for Piano*, published by J.S. Sato, which harkens back to Dmitri Shostakovich. These two Paperno publications very much fit into a Russian world of post-post-romantic irony, with strong, piquant juxtapositions of tonalities and wry scalar sensibilities.

"A Little Poem" is a little Allegro agitato rondo, with a bluesy G Minor/Major accompaniment that lurches off briefly into Gb Major on occasions, evoking Alexander Scriabin at midpoint. Not your grandfather's poem, at speed, at least.

The "Waltz-Scherzo," marked "Irresoluto" and "Tempo preciso" immediately wrestles with hemiolas and Lydian / Whole Tone fragments, and goes rollickingly askew in chromatically tonal adventures.

Both pieces are clearly formed, stubbornly returning to home keys at their conclusions. The printing is of high quality, too, with sturdy paper and large, easy-to-read print.

Chronicle

November 1

Death of Kent W. Kennan (b. Milwaukee, 1913). Austin, TX. "[He was] Professor of Music Emeritus [at The University of Texas/Austin]. Kennan's numerous compositions have been widely performed and published. Best known is *Night Soliloquy*, which in the version for flute and strings has been played by all the major orchestras in the country under conductors including Toscanini, Ormandy, Stokowski, and Ozawa, and recorded under six different labels. Kennan . . . attended the University of Michigan and the Eastman School of Music. . . . [A]s a result of winning the Prix de Rome in 1936, he spent three years in Europe, chiefly at the American Academy in Rome. He joined the University of Texas faculty in 1940, left to serve in World War II, taught at Ohio State University for two years, and returned to UT in 1949. He taught counterpoint, orchestration, and composition and published two of the most successful music texts ever written, *Counterpoint*, and, with faculty colleague Donald Grantham, *The Technique of Orchestration*, now in its sixth edition. . . . Although he retired in 1984, Kennan continued . . . meeting with recipients of the Kent Kennan Endowed Graduate Fellowship in Music Composition or Theory, which he endowed and continued to support. . . . Kennan's other works in various media have also been widely performed and published and include *Sonata for Trumpet and Piano*, *Three Pieces for Orchestra*, *Threnody*, and *Retrospectives*" [University of Texas, Austin].

November 6

San Francisco Symphony in Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, Kurt Weill's *Violin Concerto*, and Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements*. Davies Hall, San Francisco Symphony, CA.

November 7

Goat Hall Productions presents Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* (book by Hugh Wheeler). November 7, Goat Hall, San Francisco Symphony, CA. Through November 23.

November 20

Michael Jackson turns himself in on child molestation charges and posts a bond for \$3,000,000 bail. Santa Barbara, CA.

November 25

Death of Hugh Kenner (b. 1/7/23, Peterborough, Canada) at 80. Athens, GA. "[He was a] critic, author and professor of literature regarded as America's foremost commentator on literary modernism" [Christopher Lehman-Haupt, *The New York Times*, 11/25/03].