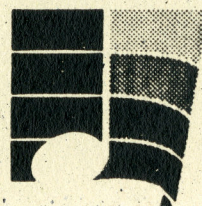




RSVP⁴

a concert celebrating
electroacoustic diversity
and compositional risk
in the music of
Antonio G. Barata
and others

March 10, 1997
Music Building Room 218
Cal Poly State University
San Luis Obispo



Timepiece (Reloj) (1997)

A short and very personal work for processed text, real-time algorithmic synthesis, and live performance, *Timepiece* (*Reloj*, in Spanish) is both a commentary about the realities of being a contemporary composer and a memorial to my grandfather. The text seeks to draw connection between my grandfather's talent for intricate, almost-rococo design in the visual media with my sound design. The composition functions much like a miniature concerto, trading between sections for the ensemble (the real-time synthesized part) and the solo (performed live). All of the timbres are manipulated clock, chime, or timepiece mechanisms which have been digitally processed. Though the solo part is fairly simple technically, the complex metering of the piece requires a precise sense of timing, and some furious counting!

Reloj

Abuelo, no puedo hacer las piedras cantar.
Quizás son muy viejas.
Quizás yo soy muy viejo.
Quizás su lengua es hoy en día extraña.
Las he estudiado con tributo académico,
noté su ascendencia volcánica,
pasé a un medio más condescendiente.

Alcancé las nubes tormentosas
y tiré hacia abajo un relámpago
de forma como tu filigrana:
como una mujer,
no, como un dragón,
no, no, como hoja detallada en luz y sombra;
arremolinando, rizando:
férreo sonido,
no, como sonido de pez quemante y burbujeando,
no, no, como coro de zarzuela,
— después como polvorilla.

Timepiece

Grandfather, I cannot make the stones sing.
Perhaps they are too old.
Perhaps I am too old.
Perhaps their dialect is now too strange.
I have studied them with academic homage,
noted their volcanic heritage,
and moved on to more willing media.

I have reached into the thunderclouds,
and pulled down lightning
fashioned like your filigree:
like a woman,
no, like a dragon,
no, no, like a leaf detailed in light and shadow;
swirling, curling:
ferrous sounding,
no, like the sound of pitch bubbling hot,
no, no, like a zarzuela chorus,
— then like a little dynamite.

Triptych (1995)

As the title implies, this is a work in three movements where each is thematically and timbrally related. The timbral palette for this work is taken from both sounds of our modern environment, and a few musical instruments. A train horn is an example of the former, and tambourine and cymbal sounds are aurally the most obvious examples of the latter. By means of digital processing, the composition explores timbral nuances and references which may not be immediately apparent in the original sounds. The work was inspired by the life and writings of Juan de Yepes, also known as Saint John of the Cross, who repeatedly demonstrated that suffering can be transformed into blessing, good can spring from the seemingly bad, and that a great wealth of inspiration can even come from the commonplace. The title is taken from the great religious genre of the past where a story or event is revealed in three depictions.

Kits Beach Soundwalk (1989)

Hildegard Westerkamp

A composition for voice and tape. In this realization the voice is that of the composer. About ten years ago, Hildegard Westerkamp produced and hosted a radio program on Vancouver Cooperative Radio called *Soundwalking*, in which she took the listener to different locations in and around the city and explored them acoustically. *Kits Beach Soundwalk* is a compositional extension of this original idea. Kitsilano Beach — colloquially called Kits Beach and originally in native Indian language Khahtsahlano — is located in the heart of Vancouver. In the summer it is crowded with a display of "meat salad" and ghetto blasters, indeed light years away from the silence experienced there not so long ago by the native Indians.

The original recording on which this piece is based was made on a calm winter morning, when the quiet lapping of the water and the tiny sounds of barnacles feeding were audible before an acoustic backdrop of the throbbing city. In this soundwalk composition we leave the city behind eventually and explore instead the tiny acoustic realm of barnacles, the world of high frequencies, inner space, and dreams.

The Stranger

Ken Nordine

A seasoned work by the maestro of Word Jazz, *The Stranger* is only available on well-used LP's. This recording has special meaning for me. Recorded by a friend, off a radio broadcast of an LP recording onto cassette, just about every kind of electroacoustic degradation is represented! This accounts in part to the pronounced digital processing that was required to bring it up to this sonic fidelity. Still, it serves as not only a memory of the early days of a seemingly timeless *communion d'esprit* I share with this friend, but also as a trace, an artifact of common electroacoustic practice. All of Nordine's Word Jazz works are improvised on the moment; keep that in mind as you listen. I think you'll agree, this composition definitively shows that improvisation is a serious artistic practice. The text's storyline speaks to every age, at once funny and serious — by the way, how are things in your town?

Intermission

Cricket Voice (1987)

Hildegard Westerkamp

This work finds inspiration in a poem by Norbert Ruebsaat, to whom this composition is dedicated.

It's hard to be a night in the desert
without the crickets.
You make it with stars.
You make it with the skin
of the desert night.
You stitch those two together
sky and earth.
You find it with your cricket voice.

Cricket Voice is a musical exploration of a cricket, whose song Hildegard Westerkamp recorded in the stillness of a Mexican desert region called the Zone of Silence. The quiet of the desert allowed for such acoustic clarity that this cricket's night song — sung coincidentally very near the microphone — became the ideal "sound object" for this tape composition. Slowed down, it sounds like the heartbeat of the desert, in its original speed it sings of the stars.

The quiet of the desert also encouraged Ms. Westerkamp's soundmaking. The percussive sounds in *Cricket Voice* were created by "playing" on desert plants: on the spikes of various cacti, on dried up roots and palm leaves, and by exploring the resonances of the ruins of an old water reservoir.

Society Songs (1997)

The texts for *Society Songs* started as children's little animal poems, but quickly twisted into commentaries on the various beasts we find in our every day lives. Using an animal metaphor, each text points to some aspect of our society worthy of a little closer inspection. Irony, sarcasm, metaphor, symbolism, and a dose of wacky humor play important parts in conveying the underlying meanings. The playful tongue-in-cheek quality of some of the songs is offset by the serious message each has to deliver. On a more technical level, the works form a set of études for electroacoustic music. Each song demonstrates an important aspect of electroacoustic technique — real-time digital processing, live performance coordinated with playback media, sound reinforced speaking, digitally altered sampled sound, and counting like mad!

(texts on following pages)

The Belly of the Snake

Slither, sliding

 . through the leaf duff gliding, hiding,
With a strike of curling, furling,
 wreathing, squeezing,
This is no snake, only its belly!

For the snake without its tummy,
 is really very chummy,
But, alas, from the belly, the snake cannot be parted — poor snake —
 and the belly forces its sway,
Wringing the prey,
 who sees the error of its way,
And with a final breathful nuance,
 asks, "Why do I have insurance."

Our Options

The scattered rattle of a record flock of birds comes to mind:
 growing, growing, and yet more of the same.
Look! At pond's edge,
 filled with a potential energy that is hard for us to fathom:
 At the ready,
 clap your hands — one, two —
 and the servants hop to it.
 Whoosh!
 Except one, aged, sickly, injured, not yet born on the wind.
Left to the predator supreme,
 it is taken, hidden, destroyed, and advertised.
Oh, this is the immensity of our options!
 Or should I say "choice"?

Business in Nairobi

A giraffe had business in Nairobi.
 Her head was filled with anxiety.
 There were roads to cross,
 highways to travel,
 and buses speeding to their destinations.
What would she see:
 crowded streets, swarming traffic,
 the hustle and bustle of so many people?
One thing, more than any other, troubled her:
 the difficulty, the danger,
 the unnecessary stepping down, stepping down.
In the city, steps and curbs are everywhere,
 and to find a way around them
 is to certainly make more
 stepping down, stepping down.

The Supervisor

In the big rectilinear office building
 was a room where the supervisor sat.
Wide windows behind him,
 and a desk in front of him,
 the supervisor was a walrus
 with tired eyes, a cigar,
 and the task of running the bureaucracy.
From his cigar and out of his nose and mouth
 billowed smoke as thick as a cumulus cloud
 rising from the warm wet plain into the cold air.
The smoke swirled and twisted into forms
 of people rushing about their business,
 traffic lights out of sync,
 and the ensuing lines of cars
 held hostage by commerce.
Amid the fumes, a vast pile of paper was methodically stacked
 and restacked with a red "final notice" stamp applied to each page.
This was all the walrus could think,
 and all the walrus wanted,
 but when he closed his eyes,
 the images would resume their simple wisps and trails
 of gas and dust.

Flitter and Twitch

Flitter and twitch,
 the scampering windborn dust
 in a frenzied dance of swirls and hum.
On the wing or more slowly
 In a small scale,
 look more closely,
 and each grain is multiplied,
 by ultraviolet led.
These are the insects!
In advance, they pay their respects.
For they will be here
 long after
 you
 are
 gone.

Canticle and Fanfare for the Black Rhinoceros

This is one in a series of my compositions that explore issues of environmental extinction. The Black Rhinoceros of Eastern Africa is dangerously close to extinction, and I felt compelled to write something to that effect. The text tells the story of a woman who has a prophetic vision wherein she is told to bring the rhino out of the darkness and into the light, an obvious metaphor for each of us to take steps toward saving the Black Rhino. After describing her vision, she concludes by saying that she cannot go back to how she was before, but must spread the news of the vision. Again, the metaphor is clear about what we should do. The woman and the brief interjections by the man in the vision are both in Swahili, a common tongue of northeastern Africa, the homeland of the Black Rhino.

Come into the Light

Naomba mnisikize; tena kwa makini.
Nilipokuwa nina lala, niliota doto, doto ya ajabu.
Kwenye hii doto ingawa kulikuwa na giza, nilisikia yaliyo fichwa na giza.
Kwa hakika nillogopa.
Kulikuwa na giza kuu ila mwanga kidogo karibu nami.
Mwanaume alie vaa mavazi meupe akaja mahali penye mwanga na akaongea nami.
Aliyosema ni, "Huruma."
Nikashangaa kwani nilifikiri mimi pekee nilikuwa mahali pageni na nilihitaji msaada.
"Giza ni yetu," akasema mwenye mavazi meupe.
Akaniielekezea kidole kwenye ukingo wa giza, nikaona mfano wa jitu kubwa.
Nyati mweusi alikuwa amesimama kimia akisikiza.
Yule mtu mwenye mavazi meupe kanipa mkono na kunivuta pahali paliokuwa na mwanga, na akaniuliza ni mwimbie yule mnyama kwenye giza.
"Mwite kwenye nuru," akasema.
Hivyo divyo lilfanyika. Hii yote lilitendeka kwenye doto.

Come into the Light

I want you to listen to me; and listen carefully.
While I slept, I had a dream, a wonderful dream.
In this dream, even though it was dark, I could hear what darkness hides.
I tell you I was scared.
It was dark like twilight except a small clearing near me.
A man wearing white stepped into the clearing and spoke to me.
The only thing he said was, "Mercy."
I was surprised because I thought I was the one who was in a strange place and needed help.
The man in white said the darkness was ours.
He pointed to the edge of the darkness, to the figure of a great beast.
A black rhinoceros stood silent, but listening.
The man in white reached out, (and) pulled me into the clearing and asked me to sing into the darkness for the beast.
"Call him into the light," he said.
This is what happened. All of this happened in a dream.
Wise One, Old One come here.
Come into the light.
See, here is a clearing, a place to raise your family.
Come into the light, wise one
Bring your children.
Come into the light.
Smell the sun-warmed grass. Here is a beautiful place.
Step into the light, Wise One.

T h a n k s t o

Matt May for sound and set-up and grandpa's very special honey

Chris Coleman for set-up and sound and Chicago reminiscing

Mike O'Connell, Prince of Sound Reinforcement

Doug Tamooka, TNT Studios in Santa Maria for explosive mixes

Michele Abba for finding places for all these words & program assembly

Howard Gee & Al Schnupp, providers of fine flats

Chris Human and Tim Human for recent inspiration

Jack Lutz, Music Factory, SLO

Cal Poly Music Department for giving me a place to do RSVP concerts

S p e c i a l T h a n k s t o

Mark Robertshaw for, can you dig it man, outside bass programming and collaboration

José Barata y Barrera, translator extraordinaire, ego amo te

Hernan Castellano-Girón, speaker and artist, friend and colleague...now, we need to do one of these together!

Kathy, Carlos, & Raquel for listening to all of this over and over and over

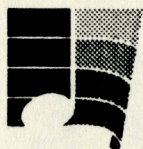
Barbara for grace under pressure and a love for M & M's....music and medicine

Dan, who kept the joint running even under anxious conditions

Jean for good ears and helpful perspective

Tom for recommending exercising restraint while playing with the Thera Band (pun intended), and for keeping surf guitar alive....hey, thanks coach!

and thank all of you for coming, for answering my RSVP.



Please join us for *RSVP 5* Tuesday, May 27!