

University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

DAT # 14,268

Presents

COMPACT
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2002
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THE CONTEMPORARY GROUP
Joël-François Durand, *director*

Celebrating Diane Thome

*A special Contemporary Group retrospective concert of
acoustic and electronic music by Diane Thome,
Chair of the School of Music Composition Program.*

December 2, 2002

7:30 PM

Meany Theater

PROGRAM

CD # 14,269

1 PIANISMUS (1982) 12:34
Deborah Dewey, *piano*

2 BRIGHT AIR/BRILLIANT FIRE (1997) 11:00
for flute & computer-realized sound
Sarah Bassingthwaighte., *flute*

3 MASKS OF ETERNITY (1994) 16:35
Solo electronic work in four movements
Shannon Hobbs, *choreographer*

INTERMISSION

4 THE YEW TREE (1979) 8:28
for soprano & large chamber ensemble

Kathryn Weld, *soprano*
Jeremy Briggs-Roberts, *conductor*

5 ESTUARIES OF ENCHANTMENT (2002) 10:57
for oboe & computer-realized sound

Rebecca Henderson, *oboe*

6 UNFOLDENTWINE (1998) 15:20
Solo electronic work

Shannon Hobbs, *choreographer*

Some Thoughts About My Music

Diane Thome

The late 20th/early 21st century is an exceptionally exciting and challenging time to be a composer. New technological advances, opportunities for collaborative work with other artists, and the privilege of working in a vibrant intellectual community with colleagues and students are immensely rewarding.

Reflecting on these acoustic and electronic works written over a period of 23 years, I am reminded of the diverse threads in my musical experience. While THE YEW TREE (1979) represents my earlier serial music, the transparently tonal and traditional PIANISMUS, composed three years later, reflects a wish to re-engage with my own history as a pianist and composer since the age of eight.

Introduced to composer music, still in its infancy, when I was a graduate student at Princeton in the late 1960s, I was fascinated with its immense potential for imaginative use by composers. MASKS OF ETERNITY and UNFOLDENTWINE, the two solo electronic pieces on this program, while often presented as pure musical compositions, were composed for specific choreographers. BRIGHT AIR/BRILLIANT FIRE and ESTUARIES OF ENCHANTMENT, the compositions which combine live performance with synthesized music, bridge these different facets of my compositional life.

THE YEW TREE (1979)

For mezzo soprano and large chamber ensemble

Kathryn Weld, *mezzo soprano*

Svetlana Abramova, *flute*

Joe Groves, *oboe*

Michael Byerly, *clarinet*

Aaron Chang, *bassoon*

Jeremy Samolesky, *piano*

Miho Takekawa, *percussion*

David Lawson, *violin*

Nathan Medina, *viola*

Stephen Reis, *cello*

Jeremy Briggs-Roberts, *conductor*

Whether my music is acoustic or electronic, what sparks my creative process is a quest for new worlds of interior adventure, exploration and expressiveness.

PIANISMUS was written out of my own experience as a pianist, with an almost nostalgic look backward at the great repertoire in the tonal tradition including such variation forms as those of Haydn, Schumann and Brahms, and with an admiring sidelong glance at some outstanding 20th-century contributions of Debussy, Carter, and Copland. The title was suggested by a friend who, upon hearing an informal performance shortly after the work was completed, remarked upon its evocation of pianistic qualities. The piece identifies itself with classical tradition in its adherence to conventional performance techniques, and formally comprises a theme, ten variations, and a finale. Composed in July-August 1982, it received its world premiere in France at the École Nationale Claude Debussy in March 1983.

At times my initial compositional impulse is connected with poetic metaphors. Such is the case with BRIGHT AIR/BRILLIANT FIRE which was suggested by a quotation from the 6th-century Greek physician, poet, and philosopher of mind, Empedocles: "For by earth we see earth, by water water, by air bright air, and by fire brilliant fire" Exactly how these poetic images evoke sonic gestures is, of course, part of the mystery and exhilaration of the creative process. In any case, I believe it is always the listener's choice how far to carry a visually or programmatically suggestive title.

The flute and tape parts are shaped as complementary and contrasting partners in a continuously unfolding sonic structure which moves through time in three overlapping sections. The electronic music opens the piece very slowly in an ethereal, airy, deliberate manner with the flute responding to its mysterious ambiance in a series of separate phrases which often take their point of departure from melodic motifs in the tape.

The electronic music of the second section is articulated through a long succession of slowly changing harmonies which evolve out of a new timbral complex. The flute provides a constant line of reiterated and ebullient patterns which bubble irrepressibly on the surface of the much more slowly changing synthesized music until a clear and climactic fusion of the two is reached with high trills in both. This climax dissolves into a descending glissando in the electronic part signaling the start of the third and final section of the piece. In contrast to the previous two, the synthesized portion of this section presents layerings of multiple acoustic sounds electronically processed and integrated with the live flute in a conflagration of sound. The third section is the only one to utilize alto flute.

The electronic portion of BRIGHT AIR/BRILLIANT FIRE was constructed utilizing the following: KYMA software running on the Capybara-66 DSP System; SoundHack and Deck IL5 software running on a Power Macintosh computer;

and a Kurzweil 2000 keyboard. Robert Austin was my collaborator in its production.

BRIGHT AIR/BRILLIANT FIRE was commissioned in 1996 by Sigma Alpha Iota, International Music Fraternity.

While my music is often inspired by poetry or poetic images, the initial impetus for this work was visual. The striking and powerful masks displayed in the Museum of Northwest Indian Art in Juneau, Alaska, made an unforgettable impression on me when I saw them in late summer, 1993. It seemed that behind the forms and frozen expressions of these remarkable artifacts lay worlds of human experience, association and meaning that could still resonate in the imagination of the viewer. The second impetus arose as a result of my collaborative discussions with choreographer and chair of the University of Washington Dance Department, Hannah Wiley, to compose a work which could be projected kinetically and choreographically as a set of mythic images which are progressively unveiled and dynamically articulated. The final influence on the piece was Sri Aurobindo's elucidation of the four aspects or personalities of the Divine Mother known as Mahasaraswati, Maheshwari, Mahakali, and Mahalakshmi. It is said that the archetypal presences which these goddesses symbolize within all human beings, although disguised, can be evoked and experienced as living and transformative energies.

MASKS OF ETERNITY was conceived as a concert work in four sections or a dance work in a series of four tableaux. Equipment used in the creation of the tape included a Kurzweil 2000 digital synthesizer and Cakewalk for Windows sequencing software. The sections were digitally mixed using the MTU Microsound Digital/Audio System. I thank Robert Austin for his collaborative assistance.

MASKS OF ETERNITY was commissioned by the Washington State Chapter of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) as part of its 1994 Composer of the Year Award. It is recorded on the Centaur label.

The dancers in MASKS OF ETERNITY are Scott Davis, Maria Simpson, Liz Young, and ~~Michael Geiger~~. *Peter Kyle*

THE YEW TREE marks a return to purely instrumental writing after an interim of nearly a decade during which time my creative attention was centered on the electronic medium. The piece was inspired by my desire to provide a musical setting for the poem by Robert Strassburg entitled, "Love's Springtime." The title, THE YEW TREE, is a reference to a central image of the poem which occurs at the beginning of its second verse. The poetic line is exploited compositionally as a primary structural demarcation. The work was commissioned by the Orchestra of Our Time in New York City with the support of a National Endowment of the Arts Composer's Grant awarded in 1979. THE YEW TREE is recorded on Crystal Records with soprano Montserrat Alavedra.

A Mountain echo
Resounds
In my heart
This April morn
The white dove of rhythm
Chants
An ethereal minstrel song
With gentle
Unpretending trills
Softly sung
Amid the thorns and butterflies
The sky-lark cries
Spreading far and wide
Love sonnets
Reveries of joy
Most sweet.

Seated under a yew-tree
I receive heaven's light
Calm and free
Tenderly spun in early spring
Your love delays
With gentle splendor
My life's excursion
Makes immortal
My rapid passage
My temporal way.

Rarely has a metaphor from nature played such a central role in my compositional process as it did in ESTUARIES OF ENCHANTMENT. The image of an estuary—an arm of the sea that extends inland to meet the mouth of a river, or the part of the wide lower course of a river where the current is met and influenced by the tides—greatly informed my delineation of both timbral content and temporal flow in the electronic part of this work. At moments dramatic, portentous, complex; at other moments transparent, gentle, even meditative—this evanescent otherworld with its churning flow of currents, densities, rhythms, and its shifting sonic content, simultaneously enfolds and embraces a solitary instrumental trajectory.

While the oboe music is presented at times in discrete melodic gestures as foreground of a large, swirling sonic canvas, at other times it is heard enmeshed or encircled by the intense electronic flow. Structured in two distinct sections—the first opens with a rapid, dramatic burst, the second with a minor triad quietly enveloped in sounds of nature—the music gradually moves towards a dissolution of all its multiple tensions and interior streams. At the end, both oboe and electronic music seem to merge in unexpected, radiant peace.

The synthesized portion of ESTUARIES OF ENCHANTMENT was created with the following software: Metasynth, Sound Hack, and Deck running on a Macintosh Cube. Sound Forge and a variety of processing plug-ins running on a PC were also used. I thank Robert Austin for his collaboration in the production of the computer-realized sound.

This work was commissioned by The Eleusis Consortium and completed in April, 2002.

Music for me is often connected with visual, spatial and kinetic experience. It was with this awareness that I began to conceive of this work as a mysterious,

slowly-unfolding journey with an astonishing, even magical, destination that would appear much later in the compositional narrative.

The sense of the unknown—the unforeseen—the invisible—was present in my mind throughout the compositional process motivating a trajectory of sonic events. The single stream of sound which opens the piece ultimately devolves, after a series of briefer digressions, into a realm of multiple, concurrent tributaries. The processes of unfolding, disclosing, interleaving and entwining which characterize the architecture of the work also suggested its title.

UNFOLDENTWINE (ICMC '98 Commission) was created primarily with a Capybara-66 signal processing system in conjunction with Kyma 4.5 software. Additional software used included Deck II, Sound Designer, Audiosculpt and Sound Hack, all running on a Power Mac.

I thank Eleanor Hovda for permission to incorporate a quotation from her *Borealis Music* and Robert Austin for his collaborative assistance.

The dancers in UNFOLDENTWINE are Darrah Blanton, Jen Mohr, Jessi Chung, Karen de Luna, ~~Jason Lamport~~, Fabrice BonJean, Mathew Gilson, Jodi Lundgren, Aaron Brisbois, Elizabeth Heard

Biographies

Composer of a wide variety of works which span solo, chamber, choral, orchestral and electronic media, DIANE THOME, professor and chair of the Composition Program, joined the University of Washington faculty in 1977.

Her compositions have been presented in Europe, China, Australia, Israel, Canada, and throughout the United States. Recent performances of Thome's works include *Through Amber* for clarinet and computer-realized sound, September 27, on the Composers Salon Concert at Soundbridge in Benaroya Hall; *The Palaces of Memory* for chamber orchestra and tape by the Camellia Symphony in Sacramento, California, November 17; and UW faculty violist Helen Callus' performance of *Like a Seated Swan* for viola and computer-realized sound in the University of Washington's Meany Theater on November 25.

Thome's awards and commissions include the 1994 Washington Composer of the Year; 1995-96 Solomon Katz Distinguished Professor in the Humanities, University of Washington; a 1998 International Computer Music Conference Commission; and commissions from the Bremerton Symphony Association (1999), Seattle Symphony (2000), and New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (2001.) Her latest commission, *Aquarius*, a work for mixed choir, will be premiered by The Esoterics in their December 2002 *Zôdiakos: The Stories of the Stars* concerts in Seattle and Tacoma.

Her collaborative works include *Night Passage*, an environmental theater piece presented in the pavilion of the Moore College of Arts in Philadelphia, and *Angels*, for virtual reality artwork shown at the Biennale des Arts Electroniques in Paris. Her music has been recorded on the CRI, Crystal Records, Capstone, and Centaur labels, including *Palaces of Memory* and *Bright Air/Brilliant Fire*, two monographic CDs of her electroacoustic work on the Centaur label.

Thome is the first woman to receive a Ph.D. in music from Princeton, where she also received an M.F.A. in composition. Her other degrees include an M.A. in theory and composition from the University of Pennsylvania and two undergraduate degrees with distinction in piano and composition from the Eastman School of Music. Among her teachers were Dorothy Taubman in piano and Robert Strassburg, Roy Harris, Darius Milhaud, A. U. Boscovich, and Milton Babbitt in composition. Thome has served as composer panelist for the Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Illinois State Arts Councils; co-chair and board member of the NEA Composer Fellowship programs; Regional Chair of the Society of Composers, Inc.; and composer board member of The College Music Society.

DEBORAH DEWEY has earned a reputation throughout the United States for her pianistic talent. Critics have praised the 'sparkling passage work,' 'warm operatic lyricism,' 'thoughtful interpretation,' and 'sense of dramatic urgency' in her playing.

Ms. Dewey has performed extensively as recitalist, chamber musician and soloist with orchestras across the country. She has been guest artist with the Oakland, Flint, Spokane, Yale and Peter Britt Festival Orchestras, among others. She has performed at the Seattle Chamber Music Festival and with the Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet in addition to her participation in duo-recital tours. National Public Radio stations in Connecticut, Michigan and throughout the West have broadcast many of her performances.

Deborah Dewey received her early training from Margaret Saunders Ott and continued study with Theodore Lettvin, Donald Currier and John Perry. She is an honor's graduate of Wellesley College with a master's degree from the Yale School of Music. Devoted to the development of young musicians, she has been a member of the piano faculties at the University of Washington, Whitworth College, The Cornish Institute and Yale University, and currently teaches privately in Seattle.

SARAH BASSINGTHWAIGHTE is an active flutist, composer, and educator in Seattle, is co-founder and principal flutist for the Contemporary Chamber Composers and Players (CCCP), is on the faculty of the Belle Musica Woodwind Camp, Marrowstone in the City, and is the Composer-in-Residence/Flutist for the Max Aronoff Viola Institute. In the summer of 2001 she served on the faculty of the Rachmaninov Institute in Tambov, Russia, performing and teaching masterclasses for their Summer Festival, and will again be touring as a solo recitalist to Russia in summer of 2003. She is a past President of the Seattle Flute Society, and also served on the programming committee for the National Flute Association in 2001. She has worked closely with composers, most recently Seattle composers Richard Karpen and Diane Thome, especially in the field of electroacoustic music, and has solo recordings of music for flute and electronic sounds which have appeared on Centaur and CCMC labels. Dr. Bassingthwaight was a featured speaker and performer at the 2001 National Flute Convention in Dallas, where she premiered a trio by Salvador Brotons. She has a DMA in Flute Performance from the University of Washington, as

well as an MM in Composition and Theory from the University of Washington, MA in Theory and Pedagogy from Central Washington University, and BA in Performance from Indiana University, Bloomington.

SHANNON HOBBS' choreography has been presented nationally to critical acclaim for over ten years. She received her MFA in Dance from the University of Washington, during which time she began her collaborations with Ms. Thome. Ms. Hobbs' original choreography for *UNFOLD/ENTWINE* and *MASKS OF ETERNITY* appeared at several Northwest venues including Bumbershoot and Arts Edge. *MASKS* has been revised from a quintet to two solo dances, each performed by a male and female dancer. *UNFOLD* has also been revised and is performed by a new cast. Ms. Hobbs is thrilled to be working again with Ms. Thome's music.

Mezzo-soprano KATHRYN WELD has performed extensively throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan. She has made two solo appearances with the New York Philharmonic and made her Carnegie Hall debut to critical acclaim in a performance of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* with Musica Sacra. She recently performed Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the Olympia Symphony. She has been featured with the Sapporo Symphony in Japan, the Bayerischen Rundfunk in Germany, St. Luke's Chamber Orchestra, the Philharmonia Baroque, and the San Francisco Chamber Singers. In the Northwest, she has appeared with the Oregon Symphony, the Portland Baroque Orchestra, the Northwest Chamber Orchestra, and the Seattle Symphony Chorale.

Weld premiered the title role in the opera *Kali* at On The Boards with Gamelan Pacifica, written by Indonesian composer Tony Probowa. She has frequently championed the works of contemporary composers, including John Adams, Tan Dun, and the Swedish composer Hans Gefors, the subject of her Master's thesis at the University of Washington. For her first doctoral recital she will be featured in an all-Scandinavian art song recital at the Nordic Heritage Museum. Weld serves on the Voice Faculty at the University of Puget Sound.

REBECCA HENDERSON joined the faculty of the University of Texas as an Associate Professor in the fall of 2001. She holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music, where she was also awarded the distinguished "Performer's Certificate." Prior to her appointment at UT, Henderson taught at the University of Washington where she was a member of the renowned Soni Ventorum woodwind quintet.

Ms. Henderson was a prize winner in the 1995 New York International Competition for Solo Oboists and in the 1988 Lucarelli International Solo Oboe Competition. Recent appearances have included recitals and classes at the Oberlin Conservatory, the Mid-South Double Reed Conference in Memphis, and the Festival Internacional de Flautistas in Quito, Ecuador, where she was a featured soloist with the Sinfonia Nacional de Ecuador. She has recorded for the Centaur and RCWinds labels.