



Department of Music
University of Alberta

Sonor Borealis

Curt Veeneman, Director

Tuesday, at 8:00 pm
27 March 1990

Convocation Hall, Arts Building,
University of Alberta

Program

Synchronisms No. 1 (1964) **Mario Davidovsky**
(b. 1934)
for flute and electronic sounds
Bill Damur, flute

Your Kindled Valors Bend (1989) **Pozzi Escot**
(b. 1931)
Kathleen Lotz, voice; Wendy Crispin, clarinet; Curt Veeneman, piano

Music for Pieces of Wood (1973) **Steve Reich**
(b. 1936)
*Trevor Bigam, Trevor Brandenburg, Scott Martin, Rajat Nigam,
and Darren Salyn, claves*

Wizard Oil & Indian Sagwa (1980) **R. Murray Schafer**
(b. 1933)
Bill Meilen, speaker; Wendy Crispin, clarinet

INTERMISSION

Vertical Thoughts 4 (1963) **Morton Feldman**
(1926-1987)
Sean Ferguson, piano

In Freundschaft (1977/1982) **Karlheinz Stockhausen**
(b. 1928)
William H. Street, saxophone

Pocket Music (1986) **Daniel A. Weymouth**
(b. 1953)
for 9 to 12 cassette players & personal percussion
*Brenda Bodnar, Trevor Brandenburg, Janis Lindberg, Fiona McCormack,
Scott Martin, Karen Noel-Bentley, Mark Sarnecki, Myron Syrotiuk, So Ling
Tam, Warren Ward, Christine Wilson, and Stuart Woronecki, performers;
Curt Veeneman, director*

Synchronisms No. 6 (1970) **Mario Davidovsky**
for piano and electronic sounds
Roger Admiral, piano

Program Notes:

Synchronisms No. 1 Synchronisms No. 6

Mario Davidovsky

Mario Davidovsky was born in Buenos Aires. In 1960 he moved to the United States where he studied with Otto Luening and Aaron Copland and began working with the RCA Synthesizer at the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. He is now the Director of the Center. He has received numerous awards, including Guggenheim and Rockefeller fellowships, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, commissions from the Koussevitsky and Fromm foundations, and the 1971 Pulitzer Prize Award in Music for a work which will be performed tonight, Synchronisms No. 6.

Two *Synchronisms* from Davidovsky's well-known series of pieces for live performers with electronic tape anchor both ends of this Sonor Borealis concert. In each work, Davidovsky attempts to preserve the characteristics of the individual media and yet integrate all the levels of sound, specifically addressing synchronization in the domains of both rhythm and pitch (i.e., temperament). The *Synchronisms* heard tonight each provide unique solutions to the prospect of combining live and recorded sounds.

Synchronisms No. 1 presents a virtuoso dialogue between flutist and tape. The synthesized sounds often seem to imitate those of the performer, as when the flutist's fluttertonguing precipitates a series of rumbles and hisses on the tape. Or, the roles may be reversed, such as when the flutist responds to pops and clicks on the tape with key taps and sforzandos. The main contrast in this work lies in the fact that the flutist displays a great deal of rhythmic freedom against the precise timing of the recorded sounds. And while the flutist explores a limited number of intervallic cells, the synthesized sounds expand the flutist's gestures in range, timbre, and dynamics.

In *Synchronisms No. 6*, written for the pianist Robert Miller, Davidovsky treats the tape part as if it were an extension of the piano. At times the synthesized sound mimics the timbre of the piano. The envelope of the piano's sound, with its unique attack and decay features, is employed in the tape part and is often transformed (for instance, by being reversed -- gradually building in dynamic level with a sudden release). From the beginning of the piece, events on the tape seem to grow out of sounds produced on the piano. But soon it becomes apparent that the large-scale design of the work has its seeds in the electronic element. As the at first insignificant synthesized tremolos are taken up in the piano part, a dynamic tension builds between the two media, resulting ultimately in a great concerted tremolo by piano and tape. What follows quietly answers the question of the roles taken in this discourse between performer and electronic sounds.

Your Kindled Valors Bend

Pozzi Escot

Described as "the most interesting and original woman composer" and "far-out" by Virgil Thomson, Pozzi Escot is also a well known music theorist, teacher, and specialist in the area of medieval studies. Born in Lima, Peru, of French parentage, she emigrated to the United States when she was 21. She studied at the Juilliard School of Music, and the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Hamburg. Her compositions have been performed around the world, and with her interdisciplinary approach to music, she is in great demand as lecturer to groups as diverse as engineers, mathematicians and medieval scholars -- as well as musicians. Pozzi Escot's many honors and awards include being chosen as one of five outstanding women composers of the 20th century when her composition Sands was performed by the New York Philharmonic in 1975. She has received Ford Foundation, Meet the Composer, and Reemtsma grants and DAAS German Government and Bunting Institute Fellowships. Her book, Sonic Design, co-authored with Robert Cogan, has been recognized as one of the most innovative and important books on music to have been published in recent years.

She is currently a professor at Wheaton College and a member of the faculty of the Graduate Theoretical Studies Department at New England Conservatory.

Your Kindled Valors Bend, for voice, clarinet, and piano, sets John Donne's "Epigram:"

If you from spoyle of th'old
worlds farthest end
To the new world your kindled
valors bend,
What brave examples then do
prove it trew
That one things end doth still
beginne a new.
(To Marianne Martin)

The work's economy of materials is exemplified at the very beginning of the first movement: two pitches, C and C#, encompass five octaves on the piano while a high G in the clarinet steadily balances on top. Soon the clarinet adds F# (creating two tritone relationships with the pitches of the piano), and, in turn, begins ranging over four octaves as the voice enters. But some of the words which the vocalist sings are fragmented; they are eroded in areas of the text which refer to the "old world" or to "ends," so that only vowel sounds remain. It is as if memories have faded, or time itself has caused aspects of the old world to vanish. At "beginne a new," shimmering stacks of tritones coalesce in the piano as the clarinet reaches its summit with its two note cell.

In the second movement, for voice and clarinet alone, the dedicatee's name informs the text. As in the first movement, the graphic score allows the performers a certain degree of freedom in rhythm, articulation, and dynamics. And in the third movement, the piano returns, but by now the text has evanesced: vocables are left to the performer's choice.

Music for Pieces of Wood

Steve Reich

A composer who has been in the forefront of the avant-garde for nearly a quarter century, Steve Reich is grouped with Terry Riley and Philip Glass as a minimalist. (Minimalism may be alternately known as phase music, pulse music, process music, modular music or steady state.) Born in New York, Reich attended Cornell University with a major in philosophy. He then went to Juilliard School of Music, where he studied composition with William Bergsma and Vincent Persichetti, (supporting himself by driving a taxi). He went on to study with Darius Milhaud and Luciano Berio at Mills College in California. His studies of African drumming in Ghana as well as his studies of the Balinese Gamelan and Hebrew cantillation have had a profound effect on his music. His awards include grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and a Guggenheim fellowship.

Five pairs of tuned claves -- wooden dowels of both the standard and African varieties -- create a complex web of sound in *Music for Pieces of Wood*. One performer provides a pulse while the others shift in and out of phase with each other, using the processes of rhythmic construction in which beats are substituted for rests, and augmentation in which individual elements of the rhythmic complex are gradually lengthened. In contrast to the extremely gradual "phasing" of his earlier works, here the shifts are more abrupt. In his book *Writings About Music*, Reich offers, "Performing and listening to a gradual musical process resembles . . . placing your feet in the sand by the ocean's edge and watching, feeling, and listening to the waves gradually bury them."

Wizard Oil & Indian Sagwa

R Murray Schafer

R Murray Schafer is one of Canada's most successful composers. Born in Sarnia, Ontario, he studied at the Royal Conservatory of Toronto with John Weinzweig. For a time he lived in Europe as a freelance journalist and an interviewer for BBC. Returning to Canada, he founded the Ten Centuries Concerts (featuring new and older music) in Toronto. He is an educator and has written many books, including Ear Cleaning, The Rhinoceros in the Classroom, and Music in the Cold. He explored the nature of physical sound in his inventory of World Soundscapes, for which he received a Donner Foundation Grant in 1973. He has also received grants from the Canada Council, a Fromm Foundation award, and the annual medal of the Canadian Music Council. Some of his musical works include Son of Heldenleben, for orchestra and tape, and an extensive, multi-sectional stage-work, Patria, of which Requiems for the Party-Girl is perhaps best known. Wizard Oil & Indian Sagwa is an extract from Patria 3.

Essai pour les Triangles may be heard on three distinct, but related, levels. First, there is the gradual transformation of what is initially a triangle wave (that is, a sound made up of a fundamental tone and its odd-numbered partials) into a multitude of complex sonorities. This timbral unfolding is not chronologically linear but rather occurs in interlocking points of cross-referents, undergoing an uneven evolution.

On a second, processive, level, two mathematical constructs are employed as a means of instilling an order to the growth and change of the music: the triangular number series and the Triangle de Pascal. These fertile numerical sets each reveal fascinating patterns which may be exploited in the acoustical dimension, including some with palindromic characteristics (reading the same forward and backward, as in "snack cans" or "race car"). The result is a slowly evolving/revolving architectonic pattern of subtle cross-rhythms and kaleidoscopically changing harmonies. Pitch series, durations, articulations, dynamics, timbres, and output (i.e., location on the sound stage) are all to some extent affected by the two sets.

Lastly, on a formal level, this work has three successive "sides" in time: an exposition (thesis), a development (synthesis), and a disintegration (antithesis). It is in the last section that the roles of the two number series are reversed. All motion becomes retrograde at this point as the music splits into two parts, forming an augmented canon (this may be compared to playing "follow the leader," but here the follower's feet barely move, as in a dream). The two opposing forces in the music now dissipate all forward momentum and as elements are disintegrated (actually, the final step of the timbral process) the remaining acoustical energy is absorbed into nothingness.

Essai pour les Triangles was produced in April and May of 1987 on a Synclavier II digital synthesizer.

Curt Veeneman

Wizard Oil & Indian Sagwa *continued*

"Johnny Mailloux, recently turned medicine man, sets up a table and several multi-coloured posters advertising 'Wizard Oil and Indian Sagwa,' the balm for all ills. Behind him the ancient chief Sam Padoopi, dressed in full garb with headdress, stands motionless like a cigar-store Indian, except that instead of a cigar he holds a clarinet. As Johnny puts the finishing touches to his display, San begins to play."

-- from the score of *Wizard Oil and Indian Sagwa*.

In scoring this artfully crafted sales pitch, Schafer at times employs proportional notation, and at other times, conventional notation with verbal guidelines. As the two conspiratorial participants continually cue off each other, the clarinetist's motivic gestures paint vivid images of the speaker's peroration. The audience soon discovers that Johnny's claims are irresistible, even if presented in a curious and bizarre manner.

Vertical Thoughts 4

Morton Feldman

One of many who set the stage for minimalism, Morton Feldman was born in New York. After private studies with Wallingford Riegger and Stefan Wolpe, he met John Cage in 1950. The philosophies of Cage and Feldman's friendship with the abstract expressionist painters of the 1940s were powerful influences on his work. Feldman's greatest contributions lay in creating new notational means that allow for "indeterminacy in a predetermined way."

Feldman received a Guggenheim fellowship, an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters and a commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation, among other honors. During the 1970s he was on the music faculty of the State University of New York in Buffalo and there originated and directed an annual festival of contemporary music.

The subtle play of timbres, subdued dynamics, and placid spirit of *Vertical Thoughts 4* embody the characteristic ethos of much of Feldman's music. Here, vertical aggregates and isolated tones calmly speak from various registers of the piano, with silences serving as contrast. As in the other *Vertical Thoughts* (1-5, for various instruments, solo or in combination), the performer interprets free durational values. Only pitch (noteheads) and general tempo are indicated. This music is non-developmental; it is rather a quiet evolution in time that the listener subconsciously follows. While many of Feldman's works move within a very large time-scale, *Vertical Thoughts 4* provides us with a microcosm, a window into a separate continuum that Feldman discovered.

In Freundschaft

Karlheinz Stockhausen

Born in Mödrath, near Cologne, Germany, orphaned and sent to youth camps during World War II, Stockhausen became one of the leaders of the European avant-garde in the 1950s. He studied with Frank Martin at the Köln Musikhochschule, with Olivier Messiaen at Darmstadt (along with Pierre Boulez and Iannis Xenakis), and later investigated phonetics and communication science at the University of Bonn.

In his compositions he has explored techniques ranging from integral serialism (he was the first to serially organize physical space) to aleatoric techniques, including mobile form with a statistical arrangement of events. As a composer, theorist, and educator, he has become greatly influenced since the 1960s by Eastern Indian philosophical thought and his works have been growing in magnitude in a seeming attempt to encompass the entire higher consciousness of the world. His mammoth opera-cycle, in progress, Licht ("Light"), employing solo voices, solo instruments, solo dancers, chorus, orchestra, dancers and electronic music requires an entire week for its performance (each day has its own opera). He is the author of several books, and many more have been written about him. In the 1950s and '60s he edited the journal, Die Reihe.

In Freundschaft ("In Friendship") was conceived so that it could be played by different solo instruments. The original version was composed in 1977 as a birthday gift for the clarinetist Suzanne Stephens. It has since been transcribed for many other instruments, including bassethorn, bass clarinet, oboe, violoncello, bassoon, trombone, and flute. The present version, for saxophone, was produced in 1982.

Stockhausen writes, *"In Friendship is composed in three layers -- as a horizontal polyphony -- and demands a special art of listening. At the beginning is the formula, out of which the entire piece is composed. The formula consists of five limbs separated by pauses. By means of a gradual acceleration on the last interval of the fifth limb (the minor second) a trill develops in the middle register, becoming the line of orientation for the whole composition. The formula then enters in three layers: The limbs in a high, soft, tranquil layer alternate with those in a low, loud, fast layer around trill segments which are heard as a middle layer to which all pitches relate. Those who listen closely will discover that the high and low layers are reflections of each other in time and space. They move chromatically towards each other in seven stages, exchanging limbs and uniting into a continuous melody in the same register.*

*"The process twice breaks out in enthusiastic cadenzas: the first time "free" after the third stage, the second time "vehement, happy" after the sixth stage. In some places the tempo is slowed down so much, or a pitch constellation is repeated so fast, that it is possible to hear into the finest details of the formula, and the beauty of the sound makes one forget the development for a moment. Clear differentiation, relation to a common and constant centre, exchange, approaching one another, movement of the lively ascending elements towards the end of the formula: *In Friendship*."*

Pocket Music

Daniel A. Weymouth

Daniel A. Weymouth (b. 1953) received his training from Michigan State University and the University of California at Berkeley, where he studied with Olly Wilson, Andrew Imbrie and Richard Felciano. He has composed in a variety of genres, from serious music to popular to jazz, using both standard and electronic media. From 1984 to 1986, he lived in Paris as a recipient of a UC Berkeley fellowship, where he was a member of IRCAM's (Institute for Research and Co-Ordination of Acoustics/Music) Musical Research Group. He also studied mathematics and musical aesthetics with Iannis Xenakis while working at Xenakis's studio CEMAMu (Centre D'Etudes de Mathématique et Automatique Musiques).

He was invited as a composer-in-residence to the Strasbourg, France, festival Musica '85 and the 1986 International Seminar Week in Lüneburg, Germany. He is a founding member of NAME (New American Music in Europe), a Paris-based composers' collective for the presentation of new music. His own works have been performed in France, Germany, Switzerland and the United States.

He recently joined the faculty of the Department of Music at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he is the director of the computer music studio.

The composer writes, "Pocket Music involves numerous contradictions. The relative liberty afforded the players is nonetheless regulated by the rigidity of the tape parts. In turn, this rigidity is partly vanquished by the fact that the cassette players will almost certainly play at slightly different speeds, gradually distorting the formal structure. Most of the tape sounds are of natural origin -- many being "junk" sounds: pieces of scrap metal, the legs of a monitor stand in the studio, etc. The sounds were dissected and altered using the formidable resources of IRCAM (Vax, MacIntosh and 4X) and Iannis Xenakis' studio CEMAMu, then remixed until they reached their final form, which is played on portable cassette machines. In terms of the technology, it is as if one were taking a giant pyramid and standing it on one corner.

"The piece is a serious exploration of some ideas I have about how timbre may illuminate form and how the memory of timbre is affected by time and events. But at the same time, it is a divertimento dedicated to the notion that it is OK to have fun.

"All of this, of course, reflects my own sense of humor and my firm belief that the capacity to discover and imagine is necessary for human survival, not in the least because an appreciation of the abundant absurdities of life is one of the things that makes life bearable."

NOTES:

Step right up and obtain your very own bottle of Wizard Oil, the balm for all ills! As Johnny Mailloux knows, Sonor Borealis relies on the volunteer efforts of its performers and technical assistants. But expenses do accrue due to purchases or rentals of scores, tapes, and performance materials. You can show your appreciation for these concerts by helping out with a donation. Find Johnny Mailloux and Chief Sam Padoopi shamelessly hawking bottles in the lobby during intermission and after the show.

All are invited to fly by Campus Earl's after the concert, where parrots await with free refreshments: 87 Ave and 112 St. (5 minutes from Convocation Hall). Maps are posted in the lobby.

Special thanks to John McCormick, Director of the Alberta College Percussion Ensemble and to Garth Hobden, Electronics Technician with the Music Department at the University of Alberta, for their assistance in this concert. Thanks also to Gordon McRae of the Pharmacy Department for the donation of bottles. The Pharmacy Department is not responsible for the magical potion contained therein.

Sonor Borealis is made up of faculty and students of the University of Alberta, in addition to members of the community. The purpose of Sonor Borealis is to bring vital new music to the northernmost major city in Canada. Our programming reflects two criteria: music which represents new directions (either current music which pushes boundaries in one way or another, or works which have cleared paths earlier in the century and have had an effect on subsequent composers) and music which represents a broad sweep of styles found in the world today.

Program notes by Curt Veeneman unless otherwise indicated.



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