

OREGON COMPOSERS FORUM PROGRAM NOTES

Noche LXXX

Jeremy Schropp

Noche LXXX, for voice and piano, is the concluding song in a cycle of four, which is based upon the prose of Pablo Neruda, as found in his 1959 poetic compilation, *Cien sonetos de amor* (One Hundred Love Sonnets). In accordance with the song's temporal allocation within the cycle, the text implemented has been excerpted from the final section of Neruda's compilation (*Noche* or *Night*). In this section he focuses his compositional eloquence and personal insight on examining the passion, intensity, delusion, suffering and, perhaps most importantly, salvation allied with the human notion of "love," through an aesthetically "nocturnal" lens. Thus, the accompanying music is intended to not only reinforce the imagery and metric grace brought forth by his words, but also to convey the inherent emotional conflict associated with the human pursuit of absolute and unconditional love and its often unattainable realization. To most effectively portray this emotional paradox I have employed a harmonic language that interweaves a highly tonal/modal melodic line (embodying the concept of a "perfect" or "idealistic" love), as found in the vocal part, with piano accompanimental gestures that exploit a blend of both consonant and dissonant harmonic structures (signifying the perpetually fluctuating state of "realistic" or "actualized" love). Furthermore, the piano is intended to convey a "nocturnal" aesthetic through persistent repetition of a "night" motive. This has been employed in hopes that the listener will be reminded of time's ever-present influence upon human emotional perception.

The City of Gid

Jesse Benjamin Jones

I know it may seem to you a strange title, especially for a piece of music. I often have been asked about this piece's origins, and have replied with hesitation, mainly due to the fact that the city of "Gid" does not exist, at least to my knowledge. The reasons behind the title of this piece, and the notes in it, are the same for many of my works; I dream them. Quite often I have a dream in which I am writing a piece, and an older woman, who is wearing a black pin-striped business suit, comes to my working desk and asks me what the name of my piece is. I look up from composing it and tell her, as though I have always known. Still, in my dream I look at my piece, write the title at the top of it, and return to composing. It is generally at this point that the light of morning brings me into consciousness. I get up and go write down the title I gave the woman in my dream (in this case, *The City of Gid*) and scramble to write down the notes I remember from my dreamed score. That's it. To my knowledge there is no deep meaning within this piece's sonorities, and no story or rhapsodic tale to accompany its fanciful title. I just had a dream and wrote down what I remembered. If this piece is programmatic, it must be a subconscious sound-scape that describes some subliminal Utopia, which exists only in some inner layer of my psyche, and of which I am completely oblivious.

This Is My Beloved, This Is My Friend

Aaron Manela

This is my beloved, this is my friend is a quotation from the *Song of Solomon* that is often quoted in Jewish wedding covenants. This piece seeks to convey, through musical line and texture, the warm feelings of love and friendship that come from being partners for a long time. This contrapuntal work is a study in texture and string writing. It begins with a simple chord progression over which the first violin plays one of the two melodies of the piece. Each player in turn takes up the melody, and then the second tune emerges out of the accompaniment to the first. This second tune turns briefly into a waltz, and the players begin to play each against the other in duets. The texture then thickens, and the original music returns and builds to a climax. This piece is dedicated to my wife Sara.

Piano Suite

Matthew Pearson

Piano Suite explores various melodic and harmonic frameworks in five diverse movements. The diversity of each is unified only by a four-note motive: G, E-flat, D-flat and F (a 9th below the G). The suite begins with a disjunct, atonal first movement, consisting primarily of an interval collection of 2nds (7ths) and 4ths (5ths). This interval collection is used with chromatic variants to produce the chords that drive the piece rhythmically. The second movement revolves around rhythmic displacement. The

displacement is complimented by a high amount of chromaticism in the accompaniment. Chromatic and octatonic scales are contained in the melody as well, yet the texture is mostly smooth in voice leading to balance out the brash, disjunct accompaniment. The third movement is a polytonal/metric tigh trope that converges to form a coherent sound world, which could be interpreted as having one tonal center and metric tactus. Just as the character unfolds, it is turned on its head. As the middle of the suite, the third movement serves the greater purpose of resolving some of the ambiguous harmonies and disjunct motion of earlier movements. Movement four is essentially a contrapuntal composition that, though hard to hear at first, is tonal in conception. Dissonance treatment is the largest tonal cue, with each new music motive following an arch of relatively little intervallic dissonance to a high degree of dissonance. This tension pull is slowly alleviated throughout the piece. The fifth and final movement is a drastic and almost comical transition of style, harmony, melody, compositional technique, genre: you name it. The shift results in a jazzy, coloristic piece, which I feel surprises the listener and suspends the conclusion of the suite in a way that is almost a relief.

Music for Spoken Word No. 2

Jason Gerraughty

Music for Spoken Word is a series of pieces that were created due to a distinct lack of performing talent on the part of the composer. Embarrassed by and insecure of my limited abilities on the horn (my primary instrument of eleven years) and piano (the instrument of composers), I originally set out to create a kind of music that would challenge all people equally, with a specific disregard for standardized musical training. I elected to use spoken word as a medium, because it is something of a common denominator amongst people, as well as the feeling of it being more organic and historical. The Greek word for music also meant “artful speech.” *Music for Spoken Word No. 2* is a study of canonic procedure, a technique that has been used for centuries in much of the world’s music. When explaining a canon in a nonmusical sense, one comes up with the explanation that a canon is a systematic imitation of changes in relation to multiple objects over time. Musically, these are most commonly pitch (the highness or lowness of a sound) and duration of sounds in real time. *Music for Spoken Word No. 2* uses these ideas to transform a set of texts into a piece of music through altering pitch, duration, and volume (the amplitude of a sound) systematically (though not absolutely specifically) in relation to the other participants’ simultaneous transformation of their texts.

Piano Sonata

Justin Morell

This final movement of *Piano Sonata* explores two musical gestures: the widening of range between the two hands of the piano, and the rhythmic alternation between them. The opening repeated note breaks apart into two opposing forces, with tense chords predominantly in the right hand and an angular single note melody in the left. This separation is small at first, but grows wider as the piece progresses. Throughout, a melodic counterpoint ensues between the high and low voices, each filling in the gaps of the other. While the melodies are somewhat disguised by the choppy nature of the first half, they come to prominence in the slower, more fluid moments of the latter half.

Two Fugues

Paul Hembree

The Diabolic and Celestial fugues were originally written as style studies in counterpoint. As the titles suggest, hellish and heavenly sound worlds are set in stark contrast to each other. Yet despite the differences between the blistering Diabolic theme and the serene Celestial theme, the two fugue subjects are actually reflections of one another.

Begins, Before, Becomes

Nolan Stolz

John Miner, guitarist, and Nolan Stolz, drummer and keyboardist, have been composing for and performing in Art Rock Circus since 1999. *Begins, Before, Becomes* is a piece written for their 2005 double CD release *Tell a Vision*, on the Tributary Music Label. The composition process was different for this piece, because the music was composed by ear and then immediately recorded, rather than written down and then performed. The sheet music used in tonight’s performance is actually a transcription of the CD. “With the passages of pipe organ and violin being at the fore throughout, [Begins, Before,

Becomes] is closer to Chamber music with elements of Opera, but is still filled with the genuine spirit of late sixties' Art-Rock" (Vitaly Menshikov, Uzbekistan Progressive Rock pages). Miner' text was inspired by the Michael Talbot book "Holographic Universe." Miner gathered from the book that "everything we do is essentially being projected from somewhere else onto the canvas [in which] we call 'life'."

Three Rumi Love Songs

Aaron Rosenberg

Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-73) was a philosopher, mystic, and ecstatic poet. Translator Coleman Barks defined ecstasy to Bill Moyers: "each moment [is] solid and actual, yet numinous, shot through with divine light and guidance." *This is how I would die* speaks of love as transcendence of self. The singer declares her devotion and surrender, voice joyously dancing and tenderly sweeping the sky. The piano ripples, surges, and effervesces, embracing her in whirling luminous mists. *Your eyes*, when they really see implies that ultimate truth-in-love is charged with a sense of derangement, an overwhelming saturation. Both singer and piano in turn swoon, skulk, and swell. *I could not have known* admits the potency of love's magnetism, which offers a self-replenishing source of rapture where all else fails. The piano music bounds fitfully in search of rest while the singer opens her heart in zealous passion.

- I. *This is how I would die
into the love I have for you:
as pieces of cloud
dissolve in sunlight.*
- II. *Your eyes, when they really see
a rose or an anemone, flood the
wheeling universe with tears.
Wine that stands a thousand years
in a jar tastes less mad
than love only one year old.*
- III. *I could not have known
what love is if I had never
felt this longing. Anything
done to excess becomes
boring, except this overflow
that moves me toward you.*

Without Title

Mei-ling Lee

- I. *Last night's stars, last night's wind
West of the painted pavilion, east of the cassia hall.
Our bodies have no colorful phoenix-wings to fly side by side;
Our hearts are linked to each other as if by the line in the magic horn.
As she passed the hook from another seat, the spring wine was warm;
Divided into teams, we guessed at riddles under the red candle's light.
Alas, I had to answer the call of duty when the drum sounded,
And ride my horse to the Orchid Terrace, like a tumbleweed in the wind.*
- II. *The East wind sighs, the fine rains come,
Beyond the lotus pond, faint thunder.
A gold toad gnaws the lock. Open it, burn the incense.
A jade tiger pulls the rope. Draw from the well and escape.
Lady Chia peeped through the curtain at young Secretary Han;
Princess Fu left a pillow to the gifted Prince of Wei.
Never let your heart open with the spring flowers,
One inches of love is an inch of ashes.*

III. *Bite back passions. Spring now sets.
 Watch little by little the night turn around.
 Echoes in the house; want to go up, dare not.
 A glow behind the screen, wish to go through, can not.
 It would hurt too much, the swallow on a hairpin;
 Truly shame me, the phoenix on a mirror.
 On the road back, sunrise over Heng-t'ang.
 The blossoming if the morning-star shines farewell on the jeweled saddle.*

Songs from the Demolished Man

Katie Saxon

The texts for these three pieces all come from Alfred Bester's "The Demolished Man." The text for the first song, *The Sea* comes from "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, which Bester quotes only in part. In the novel Bester arranges the words of the poem in a puzzle that seems to imply different possible sentences and phrases. In my setting I take advantage of this jumbling of words by using polyphony so that sometimes a phrase will run into another and create an ordering or meaning not present in the original text. I have also sought to portray the constant motion that is ever present in the ocean, even when it is calm, and this cyclical and repetitive motion is also mirrored in the form: at the end of the piece the material cycles back to the beginning, but now with the various phrases stirred up and switched about. Ultimately, though, it is a song about loss and the transient nature of life. The central movement, *Tension Apprehension and Dissention*, is a setting of the "theme song" of the novel. Over the course of the novel the main character plans and carries out a murder in a world policed by telepaths. To blur his thoughts and keep telepaths from reading his mind, a telepathic friend of his suggests that he always keep this catchy ditty running through his head. I use traditional contrapuntal process of fugue to portray the character's descent into madness as the tension and apprehension of his predicament close in on him. On a more abstract level, I think the constant counting "Eight, sir..." serves to portray the maddening pressure, speed and confusion of our modern technological existence. The text for the final piece, *The truth you cannot see*, is taken from the very end of the novel. It offers a measure of hope, and a plea for patience and understanding. Harmonically, though, I seek to show how difficult these things are to achieve.

- I. *The Sea*
*The sea is calm tonight.
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair
 Upon the straits;--on the French coast the light
 Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
 Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
 Only, from the long line of spray...*

- II. *Tension, Apprehension, and Dissention*
*Eight, sir; seven, sir;
 Six, sir; five, sir;
 Four, sir; three, sir;
 Two, sir; one!
 Tenser, said the Tensor.
 Tenser, said the Tensor.
 Tension, apprehension,
 And dissension have begun.*

- III. *The truth you cannot see*
*There is nothing in Man
 But Love and Faith
 Courage and Kindness
 Generosity and Sacrifice.
 All else is only the barrier of your Blindness
 One day we'll all be Mind to Mind
 And Heart to Heart.*