

no suggestion of silence



music by
perry townsend



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- [1] 1:37 **Frontispiece** 1997
John Root & Perry Townsend *piano four hands*
- [2] 8:00 **The Jester Sings (an elegy)** 1995
Hugh Williams *flute with digital effects*
- [3] 5:10 **Don't Ride Off** 1998
THE NEXT STAGE SPEAKING CHORUS
(Julie Morgan, Jennifer Raymond, Ann Simmons, Denise Broadhurst,
Matt Goeke, Charles B. Griffin, Nick Limansky) Perry Townsend *conductor*
- [4] 7:02 **Nightvision** 1997, rev. 2000
THE BARBAD CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sebu Sirinian *solo violin* Ramin Heydarbeygi *conductor*
- Suite for Prepared Piano** [excerpts] 1995
Perry Townsend *prepared piano*
- [5] 2:18 I. Fantasia
- [6] 4:05 II. Gavotte/Musette
- [7] 3:11 III. Passacaglia
- [8] 2:02 IV. Fugue
- [9] 6:27 **Laudate Dominum** 1998
THE CHOIR OF THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN
Julie Morgan *solo soprano* Karen Fodor *solo alto*
Ken Cowen *organ* Perry Townsend *conductor*
- [10] 9:02 **Episodes for Piano** 1984, rev. 1994
Perry Townsend *piano*
- [11] 15:07 **Kaleidostrophe** 1999
THE GOLIARD CHORALE P.S. 122 CHILDREN'S CHORALE
Thomas Percy *clarinet* Jane Lawson *cello*
Judith Olson *piano* Perry Townsend *conductor*
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TOTAL
64:01

COMPOSER'S NOTES

The music on this disc includes instrumental and choral works, dating mostly from 1995 to 2000. All recordings are from live concerts and contain both the peak energy and sonic imperfections of live performance. In at least one case, the sound of the audience becomes as important as the piece itself. These comments provide a springboard for listening and highlight a few interesting stories behind the music. I would only add that one need not listen to the whole disc at once; in fact, one or two pieces at a time may be enough for one sitting.

FRONTISPIECE, despite its proper title, is really an obnoxious little sonata movement shrink-wrapped into a minute and a half. In the manner of a crazed house guest, this dance of hobgoblins starts off by stumbling into the room, slaps us silly, and then just goes away.

I've always liked using electronics to expand the scope of live performance. At various points during **THE JESTER SINGS**, reverb is utilized to sustain notes and imply a secondary melody, or delay to create a canonic effect, or multiple delay to suggest a polyphonic sea of



Hugh Williams, flutist

flutes. But the piece also attempts to capture the energy of a friend I lost to AIDS—Hal Hudson, an immensely talented actor and director. His personality was a rich mixture of capriciousness, in-your-face surprises, and compassion—jester-like qualities that seemed to linger in the air after his death. Musically, the contrast of flute alone with processed flute amounted to a metaphor for his presence and then sudden absence in my life. Toward the end of the piece, a veiled reference to the opening of Brahms' ***Intermezzo, Op. 119, No. 1*** is heard, a passage that evokes for me, against reason, a sense of simultaneous joy and melancholy.

The less said about **DON'T RIDE OFF**, the better. Written for a *capella* speaking chorus, its text is a “found object”—New Yorkers find it daily in the 53rd Street/Lexington subway station whether they want to or not. To me, the spectacle of a hundred sleep-deprived people trapped on an escalator hearing polite but uninspired safety admonitions from a computer voice begs parody. So the piece is a comic portrait of a mundane moment, plucked from its context for our amusement and criticism. It's worth noting that this performance utilizes the smallest number of performers allowed by the score—seven—in what I think is a refreshing combination of singers and non-singing musicians. *Don't Ride Off* is dedicated to commuters everywhere.

Although written in 1997 and orchestrated in 2000, **NIGHTVISION** had its genesis in a brief adagio move-

ment from a 1984 string quartet. It retains much of the spirit of the earlier work, which came at a time when I was immersed in the music of Bartók and Berg. The title may refer to a nighttime premonition or the bat-like ability to see in the dark. I like to think of those pregnant, twittering nights Bartók spent in the Hungarian countryside in the '20s and '30s. There are shadowy heartbeat chords in the low strings, a somber violin melody that grows hopeful and resilient, and numerous swirling visions and

DON'T RIDE OFF

(text found on NYC subway escalators)

step on and off quickly
never sit on steps or handrails
never run up, or down, on escalators
escalators are for passengers only
no large packages or objects should be
carried on escalators
children should hold grownups' hands,
not the handrail
face forward—please hold handrail
attend your children
hold your child, fold your stroller
step on and off quickly—don't ride off
avoid the side of the escalator
ride safe
have a great day
never put strollers on escalators
while riding
never rest umbrellas on escalator steps



Ramin Heydarbeygi, conductor,
THE BARBAD CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



Interior of the prepared piano

interruptions leaping out from dark corners. Following a few violent confrontations, the action gradually subsides much as it might coming out of a dream, leaving us with more shadow chords and a doleful viola.

The prepared piano was invented by John Cage out of sheer necessity. Cage, commissioned to write a percussion score for choreographer Syvilla Ford around 1940, discovered that the pit was too small for a percussion ensemble. So he transformed a grand piano into a percussion instrument by securing bolts, screws, washers, felt, bamboo and other objects between the piano strings, resulting in a rich orchestral palette of gamelan-like percussion under one player's command. He then wrote copiously for the instrument throughout his career.

More than half a century later, the prepared piano remains for most people directly linked to Cage's music, despite its use by a modest number of other composers. The **SUITE FOR PREPARED PIANO** reflects my belief that this enormously colorful instrument deserves a broader repertoire. I was also taken with inhabiting old dance forms with new sounds. Modeled after the baroque keyboard suite, this *Suite* alternates between "free" and "strict" movements, four of which are included here. The first is a gradually explosive Fantasia, followed by a jumpy little Gavotte with its drone-laden Musette. Next is a quiet, haunted Passacaglia, then a three-voice Fugue "for marimbas, rattles and gongs." The preparation methods used in my score largely follow those established by Cage.

New York's Choir of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin (Chris Babcock, Music Director) premiered **LAUDATE DOMINUM** on the occasion of Corpus Christi 1998. As with the vast body of religious classical music, this piece attempts to balance musical and liturgical interests. I'm not one for detailed, literal text painting, but prefer to let the text lead the overall shaping of the music. Thus, crunchy trumpet fanfares in the organ anticipate the aggressive, declamatory opening choral statement. As the text speaks of merciful kindness, thick textures and angular rhythms soften somewhat, while the appearance of the phrase *veritas Domini* ("the truth of God") brings a sturdiness back into the music. In the middle, a *Gloria patri* for solo soprano and alto voices provides the most subdued and childlike moment of all. Eventually, more trumpet fanfares herald a return to the opening music, which proceeds to grow increasingly ecstatic.

LAUDATE DOMINUM

(Psalm 117)

Laudate Dominum omnes gentes,
laudate eum omnes populi.
Quoniam confirmata est super nos,
misericordia ejus,
et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.

Gloria patri et filio
et spiritui sancto,
sicut erat in principio
et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum.

Amen.

*Sing praise to God all nations,
praise Him all people.
For He has shown His kindness toward us,
His love and merciful kindness,
and the truth of God lasts for eternity.*

*Glory to the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning
and will be now and always,
world without end.*

Amen.

EPISODES FOR PIANO was written in 1983-84 and revised in 1994. It is a virtuoso solo piece focusing on three musical ideas or "episodes," each with its own distinct character.

The first episode is a swirl of sensuous cascades, the second a hypnotic loop of counterpoint, and the third a dark, quivering bass melody. The drama really begins once these musics are introduced, as their remnants go wandering about, soliloquizing, interweaving and competing with each other—ultimately copulating, crashing, burning and dissipating, leaving memories and questions in their wake. Whether the three episodes remain separate or become fused somehow is unresolved.

KALEIDOSTROPHE happened through a bizarre confluence of events, beginning with the idea to imbue a choral piece with images from my friend Jane Lawson's stunning kaleidoscope collection. After settling on poetry rich in color and light imagery, I decided to treat those already fragmented lines in a kaleidoscopic way—that is, by breaking them up and reordering them. I've long been interested in choral music that manipulates human speech, highlighting its quirks, funny sound colors and implications. Here, following up on ideas begun in *Don't Ride Off*, some poetry is sung, and some is chattered, whispered and layered with vocal clusters. The children's chorus has several unique roles, at turns acting as a Greek

KALEIDOSTROPHE

(William Butler Yeats, Gertrude Stein,
William Wordsworth)

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with the golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams beneath your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams...
(Yeats)

a piece of crystal.
light blue and the same red with purple
 makes a change.
it shows that there is no mistake.
any pink shows that
 and very likely it is reasonable.
a red thing not a round thing but a white thing,
a red thing and a white thing.
only a white and red are black,
only a yellow and green are blue,
a pink is scarlet,
a bow is every color.

a line distinguishes it. a line just distinguishes it.
a shining indication of yellow,
a stamp,
a blue green white bow,
a blue green lean,
lean on the top.

why is the surface outrageous,
why is it beautiful,
why is it not,
why is there no window,
why is it not when there is no doubt,
why is anything vacant,
why is there a question,
why is a pale white not paler than blue,
cover up cover up the two
with a little piece of string.

why is the example which is mentioned
not shown to be the same,
why is there a single piece of any color,
there is no suggestion,
the reason that nothing is hidden
is that there is no suggestion of silence.

single fish single fish single fish egg-plant
single fish sight.

a remarkable degree of red,
a cool red rose and a pink cut pink.
little sales ladies little sales ladies
little saddles of mutton.

all this means nothing if there is singing.

a sight a whole sight
makes a trimming such a sweet singing trimming

and a red thing not a round thing
but a white thing,
a red thing and a white thing.

any time there is music that is to question
more and more
and there is no politeness,
there is hardly any ordeal.

why should that which is uneven...
resumed...tolerable,
why should all this resemble a smell,
a thing is there, it whistles, it is not narrower,
why is there no obligation to stay away
and yet courage, courage is everywhere
and the best remains to stay.

(Stein)

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So it was when my life began;
So it is now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is the father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

(Wordsworth)

why is there that sensible silence?

(Stein)

American and European critics have called Perry Townsend's music "fascinating" and "a journey through sounds rich in surprises." His work has been performed at Weill Hall, Greenwich House and Brooklyn College, and has won honors from ASCAP, the Greater Boston Choral Consortium, Sonic Circuits Festival, Southeastern Composers Symposium, New York State Council on the Arts, and North Carolina Arts Council. He has been commissioned by the Barbados Chamber Orchestra, Goliard Chorale, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Winston-Salem Symphony, Raleigh Boychoir, and is published by Frank E.

Warren Music. Also active as a pianist and conductor, he has premiered new works at Steinway Hall and The Kitchen to great acclaim, founded The Next Stage Music Ensemble and conducts the Community Singers of Queens. His principal composition studies were with Thea Musgrave, Leo Kraft and Sherwood Shaffer. Born in 1965 in North Carolina and currently based in New York City, he is a graduate of the N.C. School of the Arts and the Copland School of Music.



Producers: Larry Iversen and Perry Townsend.

Recording engineers: Clarence Ferrari [1], Duncan Stanberry [2] and [5]-[8], Ryan Smith [3], Perry Townsend [4], Chris Babcock [9], David Barnes [10], Charles B. Griffin [11].

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Handwritten musical score for Flute (Fl.) and Maracas (MV). The score is in 4/4 time and begins with a tempo marking of *ff marcatisissimo*. The Flute part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Maracas part starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The number 155 is written in the top left corner. The Flute part has a first ending bracket over the final two measures. The Maracas part has a first ending bracket over the final two measures. The score is written in ink on a white background.