

James Paul Sain

Program Notes

Electroacoustic Works

redbird express

solo digital media

redbird express (2010), for solo digital media, is an aural whirlwind journey through the internationally and topographically rich neighborhoods pierced by the No. 7 train of the New York City subway system Flushing Line. This line was the last in New York to see the World's Fair era cars retired in 2003. Painted a red hue, the cars were nicknamed "Redbird." After their retirement nearly 1300 retired Redbird cars were sunk off the US coastline to create artificial reefs. As a child, the composer visited the 1964 World's fair in New York and was allowed by a conductor to push the button that opened the Redbird train's doors upon arriving at the fair in Queens. Little did the composer know his fascination with these trains would turn musical 45 years later while visiting the city for the first annual New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival.

subjacent queue

solo digital media

subjacent queue (2009), for solo digital media, is about musical roots. Whether from a 15th-Century armed man or the contrabass of Charles Mingus, foundations are essential. The electroacoustic "urlinie" of *subjacent queue* is based in the composer's descent into his own concatenated musical and personal underpinnings.

Beondegi

solo digital media

Beondegi (번데기)(2007), for solo digital media, is in homage to the wonderful and resilient people of South Korea. During one of his visits to South Korea the composer toured Seoul making many of the source recordings used in this work. From the historic beauty of the Gyeongbokgung (경복궁) to the modern skyscrapers reaching towards tomorrow, he has been impressed at the beauty of this ancient culture and the industriousness of her people. Beondegi is also the pupa stage of the silkworm (*Bombyx mori*). The silkworm, also industrious and beautiful, is not only the insect that creates the cocoon from which silk thread is woven into glorious garments but the pupae byproduct also serves as a protein-rich food. This snack food has a rather nutty flavor. This work is meant to convey the beauty of South Korea, the people and land of the morning calm.

SLAMMED

solo soprano saxophone and computer

SLAMMED (2006) - the one word title of the work can be used in many contexts such as "gee...I'm slammed," or "do you want to get slammed?" *Slammed* in these contexts can have any number of meanings. This work is meant to convey a sense of "slammedness" arriving at the point of psychosis. Though, this might only be the plight of a delusional composer and his personal hypnopompic hallucinations related to the melodic third.

Thanks to Ron Parks for his spectral accumulation and evaporation MSP algorithm. SLAMMED was written for saxophone virtuoso Susan Fancher.

ball peen hammer

solo flute and computer

ball peen hammer (2004) - a tool meant to coax raw metal into desired shapes approximating a musical instrument. The musical instrument then can be used to beat the hapless listener into musical submission by its metallurgical induced force. The flute, often thought as a gentile and civilized instrument of historic reason, is utilized in this work as a sonic weapon. Bleeding may be a result...or perhaps liberation. Be very cautious - listen with due care (and do not operate heavy machinery while under the influence).

Thanks to Ron Parks for his spectral accumulation and evaporation Msp patcher!

Tubular

solo digital media

Tubular (2004), for solo digital media, is the third in a series of works that focus on the sounds and activities found in and around subway systems. Following in the tracks of *Tåg till...* and *Coriolis Effect*, *Tubular* blossomed from sound source recordings the composer made while in San Francisco, California. The backbone of transportation in the Bay Area, B.A.R.T. comes to life with more than bland mechanistic sounds. People and machine blend together to become one during their cannular transport from suburb to civic center.

Scattered Voices

digital media and poetry reading

Scattered Voices (2002), for digital media and poetry reading, was written in homage to humanity. The voice is the most personal and powerful of all modes of communication. It can shatter the soul, announce a holocaust, tell of love, and uplift the spirit. The composer has struggled with the sincere expression of his viewpoint on current world events. The listener is encouraged to journey through the soundscape, revealing their own point of view.

seven turtles - by Lola Haskins

On the Withlachochee last Saturday,
seven turtles in graduated sizes queued
on a log, routine as the osprey nests,
empty this time of year, normal as
the occasional alligator, its blunt nose
and hooded eyes half-submerged,
as are most fears most of the time,
until a plane slams into a building
or a son can't be found. We are
spoiled, you and I, guilty of
saying of the good dark bread
on our plates not, *how delicious*,
but *where's the rest*. And so
with the osprey nests, the turtles,
even the palms leaning so low
they parallel the water. But now

a wood stork crosses our bow
And another. And when we
look left, where river-flow
complicates into cypress creek,
we see it: hundreds of wood storks
with their black-edged wings,
hunched like priests in the trees.
And I remember that morning
in Cairo, years ago, when the veiled
figure next to me, on the side of
the aisle that was all women,
turned, and took my western hands
in hers as if my fingers might
be breakable, as if she loved them,
and said, in the only language
we both understood: *Pass this on*.

Coriolis Effect

solo digital media

Coriolis Effect (2002), gets its title from the "effect" that determines, among other things, the swirl direction of water going down the drain. Like most Northern Hemisphere dwellers, I was delighted my first morning in Buenos Aires to witness the hemispherical difference of the swirl direction first hand. Coriolis Effect was composed as a tribute to all my wonderful Argentine friends as they search for the return of economic and cultural stability to the country they love so much. From the crunch of the harmonies in the tango to the exhalations of the bandoneón, from the creative navigation of their cars to the sharing of mate (a tea made from *ilex paraguarensis*) between dear friends, the passion of the Argentine people is evident in every part of their lives. This composition emerged from research initiated in the summer of 2001 when the composer was invited to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to present on the "Sonoimágenes 2001" festival of electroacoustic music.

Lix

solo digital media

Lix (1999) - Growing up in the age of rock-and-roll tends to influence one's perspective on art music. It is through the guitar "lick" that some members of society learned groove. In this composition, through only painting the illusion of an original tune (or perhaps a tease of a riff) focus is brought to the space between the notes.

Hyper-Sensitivity

for WX-7 wind controller and digital media

Hyper-Sensitivity (1998), premiered at Gardner-Webb University, is based on the transitions between sounds. The Yamaha WX-7 wind controller is not used in the usual way you may see other performer using this or other more traditional instruments. The WX-7 is used as a instrument that controls the improvised placement of sound objects, sonic events, and gestures within the structural framework of the composition. These events are pre-performed or composed and then place on audio compact discs. The audio discs are in CD-ROM drives and connected to an Apple Macintosh Powerbook running Opcode's Max software; the tracks on each disc are triggered by the WX-7 via MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) as needed by the performer.

Tåg till ...

solo digital media

Tåg till ... (1998) owes its lineage to those electroacoustic works with a transportation theme. Like Pierre Schaeffer's "Etude aux chemins de fer" (Railroad Etude, 1948), Tåg till ... is about another rail based mode of transport. While living in Stockholm, Sweden, during the summer of 1995 I took a portable DAT recorder around with me on my journeys to and from the Institute for Electroacoustic Music Sweden (EMS). This meant a 45-minute trip from Stockholm University, mostly by subway to the old brewery on Södermalm. I became enchanted with the musical sounds around me from both the machinery and the people of the underground railway (though, like many "subways" the Stockholm system often rises above the terra firma to get a breath of fresh air). I was particularly interested in one engineer's voice on the train to Telefonplan.

Sieve

solo digital media

Sieve (1996) was composed by applying granulation processing to the sampled sound of a crystal glass "ping." Like sand running through a sieve, the recontextualized concrete sound becomes rarefied yet still unmistakably similar to the original sonic gesture.

Kornighet

for solo Bb clarinet and digital media

Kornighet (1995), the Swedish word for "granulated," was commissioned by clarinetist Anna Carney and East Tennessee State University. It is the result of research initiated at the Institute for Electro-Acoustic Music in Sweden (EMS). This research was made possible through grants from the Office of Research, Technology, and Graduate Education, the College of Fine Arts, and the

Department of Music at the University of Florida as well as a Swedish-American Exchange Fund from the Swedish Consulate General to the United States. The electroacoustic elements of the piece were generated and manipulated with the Csound software synthesis system. All tape sounds utilize granulation synthesis as macro-control over the synthesis methods and sample manipulation. All timbres originate from clarinet or "clarinet-like" sounds.

Evanescence

for solo French horn and digital media

Evanescence (1997) deals with the fading away both musically and metaphysically. Though all things fade away, some choose not to do so quietly. All sounds come from samples of virtuoso hornist, Paul Basler, to whom this work is dedicated.

... from these shores

for narrator and electroacoustic sounds

... from these shores (1992) is based on poetry from Walt Whitman's Drum Taps (1865).

Sections used are:

- Mother and Babe
- Beat! Beat! Drums!
- Hymn of Dead Soldiers
- World, Take Good Notice

The current version of this work is written for narrator and electroacoustic sound. It incorporates sampled vocal sounds, synthesized timbres, and electronic processing of acoustic sounds. The two outer sections for solo narrator frame the inner movements. This composition was inspired by the call to war and its aftermath. It dedicated to the young men that died defending The University of Alabama in 1865; only four buildings were left standing...the year Whitman wrote Drum Taps.

Aerokinesis No. 1

solo digital media

Aerokinesis No. 1 (1991) is the first in a series of pieces dedicated to the study of sound movement (spacialization). When considering titles for this composition the composer searched for a term or phrase to describe the foundation of all atmospheric sound propagation, "moving air." Three basic timbre algorithms are utilized in this work; they are derived from frequency modulation (FM), Forrier synthesis (additive), and subtractive synthesis (filtering). Each color is a product of "timbre evolution." The syllables "ow" and "n-ah," a bell timbre, and a distortion synthesized sound with independently evolving carrier and modulator, are the sonic triune that comprise the resources encompassed in this piece. The

interval set [M2, m2, and m3] constitutes the primary pitch material of Aerokinesis No. 1. This composition was realized on the Alabama Supercomputer Network's CRAY XMP-24.

Alleluia

solo digital media

Alleluia (1989) was composed on an IBM PC/AT using MUSIC4BF. During the spring of 1989, I had been developing a program that approximated the vowel sound of human speech. The vowel sounds in the composition are synthesized by digitally filtering a sound source of great spectral energy (often noise). The composition is my reaction to the music of Tibetan and Mongolian monks, sometimes referred to as "throat" singing. The lowest "voice" part is a Tone 1 Paschal "Alleluia" from the Liber Usualis. The other two voices are derived from this same material. The overtones are original counterpoint. The choice of a liturgical text was due to my immersion in another project at that time, a Requiem Mass.

Theme from "Sonic Images"

solo digital media

Theme from "Sonic Images" (1988) was created for a radio program I hosted of the same name. The program aired from 6:00-8:00 a.m. every Saturday morning on WUAL in West-Central Alabama. I had started work at the radio station my first year in doctoral studies at the University of Alabama in order to gain some "extra" money. These funds enabled me to purchase my first Apple Macintosh computer with 1MB of RAM (later upgraded to a whopping 4MB). It was with this computer and the Ensoniq ESQ-1 keyboard that I made my first real venture into the world of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface). Tristram Cary of the BBC once said in referring to the Radiophonic Workshop, this is a place for "applied" electronic music. I would consider this work "applied" electronic music as it was used for a specific purpose; to get the listener of my radio show to enter the world of new age music.

Quartet

solo digital media

Quartet (1988) was written as a project dealing with several parameters in digital synthesis. Using the MUSIC4BF language, my personal research led me to experiment with FM (frequency modulation) synthesis and C:M (carrier to modulator) ratios, which are parameters of this type of sound synthesis. In this composition, the effect of timbre change during the duration of a "note" was created by evolving C:M ratios that cross at the middle of each event duration, thus always having a value of 1:1 halfway into each pitch set. The pitch content is a collection of six notes. The original material was varied through transposition and rhythmic permutation. Percussive timbres were obtained by speeding up the

sequence to a point at which pitch is no longer perceptible. Channel travel is another important sequence and the channel location synchronized. The title "Quartet: is derived from the use of four similar "instruments," which is the computer analogue of any quartet of acoustic instruments, such as a string quartet or a barbershop quartet of vocalists.

Acoustic Works

Syllogism No. 3

for solo flute

Syllogism No. 3 (2017) is a teleological extrapolation of two ideas. These two premises are synthesized and combined to form logical musical conclusions. Written for the flute virtuoso, Wayla Chambo, the piece utilizes numerous extended techniques.

Aloiv

for solo viola (with little time)

Aloiv (2016) was written for the "soundNOW" festival in Atlanta and premiered 10 April 2016 in Kopleff Recital Hall at Georgia State University. The theme for the work appear from the composers inner ear during a Composition Skills No. 1 course and was the source of years of works by his students. This brief work, limited to 60 secs by the commissioning group, is the composers first go at somewhat fleshing out this idea for himself.

A Brief View Of Eternity

for clarinet choir

A Brief View Of Eternity (2006) is homage to the composer's maternal grandmother, Grace May Ayres, who passed away at the age of 95 in February of 2002. The work is meant to represent the eternal nature of selfless love. The composition was inspired by her shared memories of doughboys returning home by ship from World War I at the docks in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The bands, perhaps those of the Salvation Army or military, meeting the ships carrying the wounded and dieing played "Nearer My God To Thee." As the young men disembarked from the ships, the most severely stricken were carried on stretchers and in baskets. The work is based on the 1856 Lowell Mason hymn tune, "Bethany." The tune is most often performed with words loosely based on *Genesis 28:11-12*, "Nearer My God To Thee," by Sarah Flower Adams.

Confluences

concerto for clarinet and octet [fl, b cl, tpt, hrn, vln, vc, pno, perc]

Confluences (2001) is a single movement "concertino" for clarinet (Bb or A). Written for the clarinet virtuoso Mitchel Estrin, the work is the flowing together

of several distinct ideas in to one teleological whole. The work focuses on the development of several unique musical elements that merge into a unified statement. The harmonies are based upon a non-symmetrical octotonic scale which originates from two quartal/quintal structures, one quartal and one quintal, juxtaposed by a half-step. The rhythms of the work are intended to evoke some of the vitality found in "classic" rock'n'roll. The highly linear writing in the solo clarinet part is punctuated by the "rhythm section groove" exemplified at times in the octet.

Cathexis

concerto for saxophone and wind ensemble

Cathexis (1996) is a single movement "concerto" for both soloist and ensemble. The title is derived from a term used by Freud in psychoanalysis to denote a concentration of psychic energy on a particular person, thing, or idea. The work is written utilizing a nonetonic scale; the scale is based on a repetitive pattern of whole (2) and half (1) steps [2,1,1,2,1,1,2,1,1].

Syllogism No. 1

for solo French horn

Syllogism No. 1 (1994), as the title implies, is a teleological extrapolation of two musical premises. These two premises, though obviously symmetrically related around a pivotal interval of a semi-tone, are recontextualized and combined to form a logical musical conclusion. Written for the French horn virtuoso, Paul Basler, the piece utilizes numerous advanced techniques including sung multiphonics.

Syllogism No. 2

for solo trombone

Syllogism No. 2 (1994) is a teleological extrapolation of two ideas, one musical and the other locational. These two premises are synthesized and combined to form logical conclusions. Written for the trombone virtuoso, the piece utilizes numerous advanced techniques.

Glyptolith

duo for violin and piano

Glyptolith (1994), a stone weathered by time and the elements, was written as a musical monument to the composer's maternal grandmother, Grace May Ayres (1906-2001); like the glyptolith of the title, she saw the passage of nearly a century of time but still stood as a strong sentinel. The first movement uses extended techniques, involving playing the interior of the piano, muting and strumming piano strings, advanced violin articulation, and virtuosic performance. The second movement is based in a verticalization of the hymn tune, "Nearer My

God to Thee." The composer's grandmother spoke of an experience she had as a small child at New York Harbor as the severely wounded soldiers returned from WW I, carried off the ships in baskets, as she heard the hymn. The final movement is a rhythmically furious exploration of a hexachord and its morphing to the complement hexachord. There is also a revisitation of some of the techniques used in the first movement.

Zygote

for solo Bb soprano saxophone

Zygote (1993) is an exploration in sound for the saxophone. It utilizes a non-traditional scale, "fingered" multiphonics (as opposed to singing and playing the instrument at the same time), and key slaps. The duality of the material, slow/fast, loud/soft, high/low, single pitch/multiphonic, and their separation/integration is the primary compositional foci. Though the score indicates the work is free, there should be obvious metric emphases. Shortly after starting work on this composition the composer found out his wife was expecting their first child.

Context

duo for oboe and harpsichord

Context (1993) is an attempt to emulate certain stylistic characteristics of the Baroque. The first movement is a highly rhythmic excursion in the recontextualization of a seven note theme. The harmonic language is derived from the verticalization and extension of the thematic material. The second movement evolved from an harmonic experiment in expanding secondal sonorities. The final section of this work came from an exploration of the Concerto Grosso idea. The title reflects the composer's continuing interest in the contextual possibilities and limitations inherent in musical ideas.

Dystopia

duo for saxophone and piano

Dystopia (1992) is an exploration of several scalar patterns and their inherent harmonic resources. The first movement contrasts a percussive piano part with angular saxophone writing. The second movement allows the saxophone to sing, first alone, then above the slow moving piano, ending again with the solo saxophone. The last movement is to be played at a metronome marking of mm-120 (or better!); a highly linear texture is punctuated by verticalizations of the melodic material. The title, often used in science fiction to describe a bleak post-apocalyptic future, is the opposite of utopia.

Wicklow Fantasy

for organ

Wicklow Fantasy (1991) was commissioned by organist John Stallsmith. It is based on the traditional Irish melody "Wicklow" as harmonized in *The English Hymnal with Tunes* (Oxford Univeristy Press, 1933). The tune was adapted to text for Whitsuntide and appears as hymn 157 in the 1933 hymnal; the premiere of the fantasy coincided with the Day of Pentecost, May 19, 1991.

Declamation!

for solo piano

Declamation! (1989) is intended to be a tour-de-force for the piano virtuoso. The entire composition is derived from the brief emphatic statement that opens the work. Intervalic and rhythmic material is evolved through continued recontextualization of extracted fragments of this incipit. The work is a dramatic and emphatic musical statement.

For a Good Dog

for medium voice and bassoon

For a Good Dog (1989) is a tribute to an old friend and faithful companion of many years. The dedication reads, "for my pup, Sugar." The Odgen Nash text portrays the parallel between our human existence and that of man's best friend (although much more abbreviated in our canine counterpart). In this work Nash shows the seldom known serious side of his poetic oeuvre. In contrast to his often quoted and published punish wit, the most famous graced the pages of *The New Yorker* for many years, the prose of "For a Good Dog" is quite somber and introspective.

Piano Sonata No. 1

for solo piano

Piano Sonata No. 1, subtitled "volant" (to fly) was written for pianist Richard Bosworth. Each movement is inspired by jazz idioms from "blues," "song," and "swing." The harmonic language freely shifts between jazz influenced extended triadic sounds and more dissonant secondal sonorities. This work is a study in contrasts and extremes - from the beauty of the second movement to the "boogie woogie" of the last movement.

Parallel

for solo flute

Parallel (1987) was completed in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I was informed that Vincent Perschetti had passed away upon arrival at the University of Alabama in August of that year. Although I never met Mr. Perschetti, I had come to admire his body of composition, especially the "Parable" series. His knowledge of compositional craft is evident through his scholarly writings. It had been my desire to meet him one day. Also, having been a flute player, I wanted to express my love for the closed-ended tube. This composition is truly a parallel recontextualization of my thoughts regarding Perschetti and solo flute literature.

Diaphanous Jazz Duets

for two flutes

Diaphanous Jazz Duets (1986/87) were written for the composer and his wife for concert performance by their duo, "Chanson." As a lover and practitioner of jazz, first as a pianist in high school, then as a saxophonist in college, finally currently as a bassist, the composer sought to create a collection of engaging works that draw from both jazz idioms and contemporary art music aesthetics. These transparent, or perhaps even translucent works, are written in various styles and can be used individually or as a complete set of seven.

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