



center for new music

D. MARTIN JENNI, *director*
DAVID GOMPPER, *music director*

Featuring the music of
WILLIAM ALBRIGHT
guest composer

Sunday, October 4, 1992, 8:00 p.m.
Clapp Recital Hall
The University of Iowa School of Music

The University of Iowa School of Music presents a complete series of outstanding musical events each year. Most events are free. For a complete calendar, write or call: UI Music Public Relations, UI Music Building, Iowa City, Ia., 52242, (319) 335-1667. Calendars are also available from ushers in the Clapp Hall lobby.

**MUSIC
EVENTS
CALENDAR**

Program

Take That — for 16 low drums (1972)

Michael GEARY
Tony OLIVER
Jake ROMIG
Shawn LAFRENZ

Sphaera — for piano and computer-generated four-channel tape (1985)

Robert FULLER - piano
Kirk COREY - assistant

Introduction, Passacaglia and Rondo Capriccioso a concerto for tack piano, seven winds and percussion (1974)

Laura KOENIG - flute
Janis BROWN - clarinet
Timothy O'DELL - alto saxophone
Alise OLIVER - horn
Ann WEST - trumpet
Paul ALTENHOFEN - trombone
Scott WILSON - tuba
Michael GEARY - percussion
Duane GUGEL - tack piano
David GOMPPER - conductor

- intermission -

Quintet for clarinet and string quartet (1987)

Marla FEENEY - clarinet
Wonran KIM - violin I
Glauca BORGES - violin II
Michele MEININGER - viola
Joseph ROVINE - violoncello

This program is No. 43 in a series, 1992-93, The University of Iowa School of Music.
Ushers provided by Sigma Alpha Iota and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia

Program Notes

That That (for 16 low drums) was partially inspired by the famous galley scene in the 50s movie spectacle "Ben-Hur." In that episode a rowing pace is set by an oiled gnome pounding two hammers: the rate gradually accelerates to "ramming speed" as a warrior ship approaches. The sound of the drums in *Take That* is an abstraction of the energy contained in the pacer's periodic whaps.

Structurally, the work also finds inspiration in the Balinese "Ketjak." This is a festival ritual-piece, imitating the hordes of monkeys rescuing the Prince Rama. The levels of alternating loud and soft, plus the sense of periodic rhythms contrasted and overlaid with non-periodic, or speech-like, rhythms had a profound influence on much of my music.

Ideally the work should be heard "in the round" with the players in four corners of the hall. *Take That* was written in 1972 for the musicians of the Blackearth Percussion Group and is dedicated to an old friend, Russell Peck.

Sphaera for piano and computer generated four-channel tape (1985)

Sphaera (Latin for "sphere") is, in its marriage of computer-generated tape and acoustic piano, an attempt to extend and magnify the sounds of the live instrument. This is most clearly heard in the third of the five sections that make up the work, the tape here being based on digital recordings of an extra-large Bosendorfer concert grand. The mostly low and loud notes are altered in ways impossible on a normal piano; for example, notes which crescendo and glissando are transformed into their harmonic components, or are flung about in space.

The first section of the work's tape part, by contrast, is purely computer-generated, but it is also based on a similar principle. While the live piano is obsessed with reiterations of two striking resonant sounds—the highest F-sharp on the keyboard and its next to lowest A, muted—the electronic part extends and prolongs the aureoles produced in the resonances of these polarized pitches. Meanwhile other notes, above and below, are added, like the rings of a planet.

The metaphor of astronomy is not coincidental, as I have tried to capture a bit of the sense of *musica mundi* (music of the spheres), explained by classical and medieval philosophers as the "super-human" music produced by the motion of the heavenly bodies. Synthesized music seems to me to work well when yearning for the ineffable; it is appropriate that it can evoke the Platonic universe of audible but unnoticed planetary songs.

In addition to the spiritual dimensions of the piece, I should mention some of the humanly poetic evocations implanted in the piece: a) a "Big Ben" bell sound (produced by sampling the sound of a Reverware pan and lowering it several octaves), and b) a sort of Mid-Eastern music, perhaps creeping in because of my domicile above a Turkish restaurant while composing the piece. Lastly, and more significantly, the constant tonal friction between the tonalities of D major and B-flat minor was perhaps inspired by a late Liszt choral work, the *Via crucis*, which I studied and conducted during the same months.

Sphaera was commissioned by the MIT Experimental Music Studio with a grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts. It is dedicated to the pianist David Burge, a faithful and brilliant performer of my music. The tape was realized at MIT with the assistance of Keith Hamel and Miller Puckette.

Introduction, Passacaglia, and Rondo Capriccioso, a concerto for tack piano, seven winds and percussion (1974)

The piece was written in 1974 on commission from the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. It was premiered there as part of their Festival of the Arts and is dedicated to Conrad and Carolyn DeJong.

The work is really a chamber concerto—though a light-hearted one—for piano and winds. The piano is a special instrument: a tack piano, that is, a so-called "Bar-room" piano with tacks placed in the hammers. The first movement is a sumptuous introduction of the ensemble, while the second, a passacaglia, is a duet-parody for sax and piano alone. The last movement, the "Rondo Capriccioso," pulls out all the stops. Nothing serious here, only bawdy fun, jokes, lion's roars, and—at the end—the hint of a popular 70's TV-show theme.

The unwieldy title is an homage to such composers as Saint-Saens and Franck, both of whom contributed similarly-titled romantic gestures to the classic repertoire.

Quintet for clarinet and string quartet (1987)

Movement One: *The Wedge of Sighs*

Lento, quasi nocturne...Liebeslied;

Piu vivo, quasi tango surreale;

L'intermezzo fantastico;

Piu lento, "transcendent and hushed."

Movement Two: *Theme and Variations*

Theme

Var. 1: Danza rustica

Var. 2: Pizzicato polka on an idea of Brahms

Var. 3: Largo (Marcia funebre)

Var. 4: Andante (Night Music I)

Var. 5: Duetto I, molto rapido

Var. 6: Lullabye (Homage to Brahms)

Var. 7: Vivo (Homage to Mozart)

Var. 8: Duetto 2 (Zephyr-mobile) with

Var. 9: Lontano (Night Music II)

Var. 10: Canzone lamentosa

Var. 11: Adagio (Night Music III)

Var. 12: Klezmer Fantasy

Coda: Transcendent and hushed

In spite of the attractiveness of the ensemble, there exist only two clarinet quintets - those by Mozart and Brahms - that are part of the standard repertoire today. My own quintet attempts to follow in their footsteps, in part by paying homage to these masters and their own contributions.

Both movements are based on a wedge row, a series of twelve notes that fan out from a central pitch (for example, F, E, F-sharp, E-flat, G, etc.). Rather than being used in a rigorous fashion, however, the row is used as an inspiration for wedge-like shapes or for tonal levels. Indeed, the language in the piece is as often diatonic as it is chromatic.

The first movement, the "Wedge of Sighs," is a nocturne obsessed with a sighing motive, a descending half-step that is found at the beginning of the series. Long pedals on the opening and closing notes of the row (F and B) support the large structure of four sections. The most complicated section, the "tango surreale" exists in three perspectives simultaneously: 1) a tango rhythm articulating a harmonic motion based on a circle of fifths, 2) tight cluster sounds that wedge out and in, and 3) melodic passages based on the sighing motive. The tension of this section is relieved in the following disembodied "intermezzo fantastico" and the subsequent coda "transcendent and hushed."

The second and final movement is a theme and variations, a form found in both the Mozart and Brahms pieces. My work has a fairly complicated overall format, with various combinations of quartets, trios and

duos for the variations grouped symmetrically around the central "tutti's" of Variation 6 and 7, these latter dedicated to and inspired by passages in the Brahms and Mozart works respectively. It is interesting to note that the slow movement of the Brahms quintet is based on the opening melodic cell of the Mozart work, and I base my Number 6 on the same movement of the Brahms. The Mozart dedication picks up a curious, nagging viola line in one of his variations, extending its obsessive character to an extreme of stubbornness and frustrated anger.

Three peaceful "night" movements are threaded through these reverentially rambunctious essays; and the last variation, worthy of note, was inspired by East-European Klezmer bands. Recently enjoying a comeback, these groups of Jewish musicians feature clarinets and violins in a wild, happy abandon that I have found irresistible. True to the model of Brahms' opus, the entire cycle ends with a reprise of the transcendent closing material of the first movement.

The Quintet was commissioned by the consortium of Chamber Music Northwest, Music Festival of Florida and the Toledo Symphony Chamber Music Series, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It was premiered by Chamber Music Northwest on July 9-10, 1987, and was revised in 1988.

William ALBRIGHT (born 1944, Gary, Indiana), composer and performer, has concertized widely in Europe, Canada and the United States, specializing in concerts of recent music for organ. Although he has premiered over thirty new works written by American and European composers, he is also highly regarded as an interpreter of classic piano ragtime and early jazz styles, such as the Harlem stride and boogie-woogie.

As a composer, he is well-known for his keyboard works, though he has produced works for every medium, several of which involve electronic, visual and theatrical elements. He has been the recipient of many commissions and awards, among them the Queen Marie-Jose Prize, an award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two Fulbright and two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Symphonic Composition Award of Niagara University, two National Endowment for the Arts Grants, two Koussevitzky Composition Awards, and a Koussevitzky Foundation Commission. In 1979, he held the post Composer-in-Residence at the American Academy in Rome; in the same year, his composition *Stipendium peccati* was selected as the United States entry for the International Society of Contemporary Music Festival. The work *Alliance* was a similar selection in 1970, and the same organization highlighted the work *Bacchanal* in their programming for 1990 in Oslo, Norway. Major orchestras which have performed Albright works have included the Syracuse Symphony, the Detroit Symphony (an opening work for their 1990 subscription series season in Orchestra Hall), the Budapest Philharmonic, the Austrian Radio Orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Bergen Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the American Composers Orchestra.

Albright is presently Professor of Music Composition at the University of Michigan. In 1973, he was honored with a Distinguished Service Award from that institution, and in 1990, he received a Faculty Recognition Award. He is currently completing an opera, *The Magic City*, a commission from the University's School of Music. Albright has pursued research in live electronic music and is Associate Director of the University's Electronic Music Studio. His organ commissioning series, started in 1975, has already made substantial contributions to the literature for that instrument.

Albright's organ works are available on Gothic, CRI, Arkay, Titanic and Nonesuch recordings. A contract with Music Masters/Musical Heritage Society has produced five piano recordings, among them the music of James P. Johnson, Albright's own rag compositions, and the 1990 release of the complete rags of Scott Joplin. His compositions are published principally by C.F. Peters, with Elkan-Vogel (Presser), Jobert (Presser), Universal, Dorn, Mel Bay and E.G. Marks representing several other works.

Upcoming Center for New Music Events...

Monday, October 12, 1992, 8:00 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall

Guest Artists: Drew Krause and Paul Marquardt, piano duo

Program: Cage's *One*, Marquardt's *Three Melodies for Piano*, Feldman's *Vertical Thoughts*, Paccione's *Continuum*, Krause's *Profit Motive*, and Cage's *Experiences #1*.

Sunday, December 6, 1992, 8:00 p.m., Clapp Recital Hall

Program: John Harbison's *Mirabai Songs*, Elizabeth Bell's *Spectra*, Michael Twomey's *Cassandra's Dream*, and Eugene Kurtz' *Logo IV*.