PROGRAM NOTES


*For bass flute, bass clarinet, two violins, viola, cello, piano, and percussion*

Ró was written for the Reykjavik-based ensemble CAPUT for their concert tour in China in 2013. The Icelandic word Ró translates as “serenity” in English.


*For violin, viola, and cello*

*Sum = Parts* (2000-2002) is a cycle of six autonomous yet interdependent works: 56 1/2 feet for chamber orchestra, Authenticity for solo trumpet, Integrity for two percussion and piano, Depth for trombone and contrabass, Merit for wind quintet, and Seriousness for string trio. In addition, 56 1/2 feet is reprised at the end of the cycle, thereby functioning as a kind of seventh work.

56 1/2 feet for chamber orchestra was commissioned by the Illinois State University Contemporary Players and premiered by them in 2001. The title refers to the minimum distance a sound needs to travel and rebound to be perceived as an echo; in many respects the piece is a response to Mark Z. Danielewski’s extraordinary novel *House of Leaves*.

The five companion pieces—which include Seriousness for string trio (2002)—employ each member of the chamber orchestra once. Selected materials from 56 1/2 feet were expanded and compressed, forming a kind of gauzy and irregular template in and around which new discourses were composed. In this regard, the companion pieces embark upon new and independent musical narratives while at the same time revisiting familiar (and previously undeveloped) material through lenses of variable magnification.


*For cello, percussion, and piano*

My grandmother had advanced Parkinson’s disease. Despite its surface manifestations, her sickness was not muscular. Her body worked, her brain worked, but the method of passing messages between the two malfunctioned. She knew how she wanted to move, but she couldn’t make her muscles move. She knew what her emotions were, but she could not grasp their cause. She lived inside a radical disassociation, a gap between intention and execution so extreme that the simplest of actions required inordinate effort. This sense of disassociation pervades Therefore I Was. You’ll see it in the limbs of the cellist as they wrench away from the ordered movements required to sound stable pitches. You’ll hear it as the players strain towards a unified breath around which to coalesce. The music repels between two aesthetic poles: one pulling the instruments towards stillness; the other anchoring their gestures to an anxious, aggressive ground. This movement mirrors the crisis I watched my grandmother endure. The life to which she fiercely clung was brutal and unforgiving. At such times the will to live can seem irrational, even inhumane. And yet, somehow, astonishing, and unabashedly human.
Texts:

Aldebaran
Alamode
Lehár: Did eider
Braxy angry
Read a nork?

Bellatrix
By exuviae - less lubrication.
(And then those Repetends in Xhosa).

Capella
“Could” aslant paralysis; (elenchus: logic- Looms astir).

Deneb
De- Laminated.
En- Antiophonic nodes.
Enate be.

Elnath
Entrenched lone
Numbing: “armipotens”:
Telos hadn’t.

Fomalhaut
from over-mumble atoll. Logy half-stuff
Aroint us, turtlet!

Gienah
Gide, in extremis, necrobiotic,
Almost hegelian.

Hamel
He’d appended
Momsers, even-
Loofed.

Kaus Australis
Kryokytic aboral “up-
Start, squamose
Abdicant”!
Umpteen stuff:
Take-out-rank ap-
Pendage (leastways)
Is spondulicks.
Texts by the composer. Note: the reversed (i.e. non-alphabetical) order of Vega and Wezen is intentional, and reflects their actual placement in the composition.
MARK APPLEBAUM: CONTROL FREAK 3 (WORLD PREMIERE)

Control Freak 3 consists of four movements in which a vocalist is accompanied by an instrumental octet, both of whom spontaneously invent their own treatment of the given materials. The singer chooses texts from a collection of sonnets by American flarf poet K. Silem Mohammad. Mohammad’s hilarious, often absurd sonnets—which he calls sonnagrams—are anagrams of Shakespeare sonnets. The vocalist’s treatment may be plain or histrionic, sober or outlandish. It may involve traditional technique or the most esoteric modes of vocal production. Meanwhile, the octet responds to improvised hand gestures given by the conductor, ones that call upon an extensive reservoir of sounds, from conventional musical motives to glitch, Foley artist noises. Every performance results in a different sonic outcome, the consequence of a ludic, indeterminate, ensemble ritual. Control Freak 3 (and its ancestors Control Freak and Control Freak 2) requires a very special kind of virtuoso musician, one who is playful and imaginative, capable at once of the utmost discipline and whimsy.

Control Freak 3 was commissioned by the International Contemporary Ensemble, with great thanks and admiration to Ross Karre, and abiding affection for and wonderment at the incomparable pan-virtuosity of Steven Schick.


For twelve players

Pulse, for winds, strings, piano, and electric bass, was completed in 2015 and was, in part, a reaction to my Quartet of 2013 in which I changed keys more frequently than in any previous work. In Pulse, I felt the need to stay put harmonically, and spin out smoother wind and string melodic lines in canon over a constant pulse in the electric bass and/or piano. From time to time, this constant pulse is accented differently through changing hand alternation patterns on the piano. All in all, it’s a calmer, more contemplative piece. As is well known, composing is primarily a solitary activity. However, after completing Pulse, I sought out suggestions for improving the piece from Maggie Heskin, my editor at Boosey & Hawkes. She offered several ideas that helped motivate me to find my solution of hand alternation patterns mentioned above. I want to thank Maggie for her thoughtful and generous help. Pulse was commissioned by Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Music Director Gustavo Dudamel, the Barbican, Kölner Philharmonie / KölnMusik, and Philharmonie de Paris.

—Steve Reich

INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE (ICE)

Steven Schick, Conductor and Artist-in-Residence

Rachel Beetz, flute
Alice Teysier, flute and soprano
Campbell MacDonald, clarinet
Joshua Rubin, clarinet
Ross Karre, percussion
Greg Chudzik, electric bass
Cory Smythe, piano
Jennifer Curtis, violin
Gabriela Diaz, violin
John Marcus, violin
Josh Modney, violin
Kyle Armbrust, viola
Wendy Richman, viola
Michael Nicolas, cello

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