

UC San Diego

Graduate Students of the
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
present

First Mondays Concert Series
Conrad Prebys Music Center, Concert Hall

December 5, 2011
12 noon

American Berserk (2001)		John Adams
Pinetop (1977)	Kyle Adam Blair, <i>piano</i>	Stuart Saunders Smith
Mosaic (1962)	Rachel Beetz, <i>flute</i> Kyle Adam Blair, <i>piano</i>	Roger Reynolds
Ambages (1965)		Roger Reynolds
Transfigured Wind IV (1985)	Rachel Beetz, <i>flute</i>	Roger Reynolds

John Adams on **American Berserk** (2001)

"As its title suggests, 'American Berserk' is a short, high-energy work for virtuoso pianist. The title, from Philip Roth, hints at the darker, manic edge of American life evoked in his novel, 'American Pastoral'...Influences of American jazz and bop playing mixed with impressions of Conlon Nancarrow's disjunct rhythmic world dominate the writing of this short, manic, bipolar scherzo."

Pinetop (1977)

Clarence "Pinetop" Smith has been counted among the first to coin the term and genre "Boogie-Woogie." This piece for piano, as Stuart Saunders Smith puts it, is his (Smith's) "boogie-woogie". Smith, a former percussionist and avid writer for percussion, once said that the wide, leaping melodic gestures in the piece were the result of the translation of a keyboard percussionist's musical space and movements onto the keys of the piano. The piece makes use numerous polyrhythms, complex melodic counterpoint, and quickly-changing episodic characters.
—Kyle Adam Blair

A Long Relationship

As a young composer, I was blessed with an environment in some respects like that which now exists at UCSD. There was a cadre of thoughtful and explorative composers (Robert Ashley, Gordon Mumma, Leslie Bassett, George Crumb ...) and many dedicated performers, all regularly involved with presenting new music: sometimes on Music School-sponsored Composers' Forums, and, at others, on the notorious ONCE Festivals we organized during

the 60s in Ann Arbor. These Festivals not only presented the organizers' music, but brought to Ann Arbor John Cage, David Tudor, Merce Cunningham, Luciano Berio and the Domaine Musical players, Terry Riley, La Monte Young, later Lucinda Childs, Robert Rauschenberg, and others.

As a Crofts Fellow at Tanglewood, I met other (then young) performers with already flourishing professional careers: pianist Paul Jacobs, the Lenox String Quartet, and the Dorian Woodwind Quintet. Their flutist, John Perras, was planning a European tour with pianist Gil Kalish. They asked me to write something that they could play during their travels: *Mosaic*, a 10-minute piece with carefully worked out temporal proportions, air sounds, key-clicks, and intricate passagework for a pianist and a flutist who switched back and forth between flute and piccolo.

Perras and Kalish performed the piece widely in Europe that Fall. There were numerous reviews, but no recording. I could imagine, of course, but not actually experience my new piece. Practicing piano, daily, on the top floor of a music building, I heard, from time to time, through open windows, the beguiling sounds of piccolo practice far below. One day, I knocked on the door of the room in which Karen Hill was practicing. We talked and she agreed to perform *Mosaic* with pianist Bob James, whose trio had recently won the prestigious Notre Dame Jazz Festival. Eventually – after what felt a very long wait – they invited me to hear a rehearsal.

An inexperienced composer, I was filled with trepidation. They proposed to begin by playing through what I had written. I listened, stunned. It was my first experience with the fact that what one writes and “knows” internally never has, can never have, exactly the dimensionality that one experiences as the music actually happens under the ministrations of committed performers. I listened and realized that what I had written became, in their hands, something that meant more (and also other) than I had anticipated.

They gave the first US performance May 25th, 1962, and the second at the 1963 ONCE Festival (This performance is available on New world Records.).

It was a very good way to begin a relationship.

Several years later, Karen and I were living at the Rockefeller Foundation's Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio Italy. We were recluses, housed at the edge of Lake Como, in the 16th-century *Torre Sfondrata*. Our joint project was to read the complete Dostoyevsky, from the Villa's library. She practiced, I composed. Somehow Karen learned that the mythic French flutist, Marcel Moyse, was teaching a master class in the small Swiss village of Boswil. Karen had worked with him several summers before in Brattleboro, Vermont and she wanted to again, as a member of his master class. We drove to Switzerland in our battered Peugeot.

So that I would not feel completely out of place, Karen proposed that I compose a small flute solo in the basement of the church in which the workshop was held: “Something short and classic,” she said, “like *Syrinx*.” I worked beneath a canopy of reliably gorgeous flute music that floated down over me. The outcome did not much resemble the proposed Debussy model. Somehow, everything I came up with had a disconcertingly choreographic imbalance to it: its elastic, irregular, and drifting phrases had an ambiguous nature. One could not always tell precisely where one phrase finished and the next began. Karen found, in her French dictionary, the perfect title for it: *Ambages* (“circuitous paths”). Back in our Italian tower, we worked together on refining and editing the piece. I borrowed a tape recorder and microphone and we recorded it (over nine minutes long, as it turned out) in our high-ceilinged tile bathroom. The sound was glorious. Karen's premier performance was at the Villa Serbelloni, in Italy, during October of 1965.

After a short stint back in Paris, and three years in Japan, we came to California, and settled in Del Mar, where I took up a position at UCSD. One of my initial responsibilities was to establish and then direct an Organized Research Unit (the Center for Music Experiment and Related Research) established with a \$450,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. CME led me to examine more closely the role of technology in opening up musical futures. Just after CME was established, Boulez - planning for the new Ircam facility in Paris – sent a team to visit MIT, Stanford, and our new Center.

I began work with computers at John Chowning's invitation, during the Stanford Summer Courses following the fourth annual Computer Music Conference, hosted by CME, in 1977. Then, in the early 80s, I was invited to spend two years off and on in Paris, becoming immersed in digital technologies and their then just emerging wonders.

When I returned, full time, to UCSD in 1983, we hired F. Richard Moore from Bell Telephone Laboratories, and he established the Computer Audio Research Lab (CARL) at CME. There, I carried on work that I had done at Ircam, particularly involving the use of phase vocoding and editorial algorithms, now in an expansive work written for the New York Philharmonic's Horizons '84: *Transfigured Wind*.

This piece involves an elaborate tapestry of expanded flute sound. Transformation was the key: making new and unexpected use of the familiar. I decided that part of this transformative spirit could be captured by looking back at my 1965 *Ambages*, and wove extended quotations from this piece into the solo sections of *Transfigured Wind II*. Like its predecessor, *Archipelago* (premiered at Ircam in 1983, along with similarly new and technologically innovative works by Tristan Murail and Philippe Manoury), *TW* has a mosaic structure – a formal concept evolved from that used in the 1962 work, *Mosaic*. Earlier musical materials were re-contextualized and joined by newly composed music to form four solos with expanding proportions. Both the orchestra and computer transformations responded to and extended these solos, in turn. The realization of my original aims for *Ambages* became possible in *Transfigured Wind* as a result of access to new resources.

Several years after the 1984 premieres of the full orchestra and chamber orchestra versions of *TW*, each 35-minutes long, Canadian virtuoso, Robert Aitken, commissioned me to do a solo version for his Tully Hall recital in New York: *Transfigured Wind IV*. This represents a culmination (to that point) of my continuing interest in the flute. It incorporates – in a seventeen-and-a-half-minute span – the new techniques and formal procedures posited in *Mosaic*, the explorative, ambiguously balanced phrases of figurations of *Ambages*, multiphonics, and the computer-processed extensions, spectral stratifications, algorithmic reshufflings, and spatialization of the solo materials.

I wish to thank, especially, flutist and composer Harvey Sollberger (now an Emeritus Professor at UCSD), who recorded the solo materials for their computer transformations, Thierry Lancino, my Musical Assistant at Ircam, colleague F. Richard Moore, who established UCSD's position of leadership in computer music, Richard Boulanger, my Musical Assistant at UCSD's CARL (now Professor at the Berklee College of Music in Boston), and Timothy Labor (now an Associate Professor at UC Riverside) for their invaluable assistance in realizing the computer parts of *Transfigured Wind*. As for the musical parts, much credit goes to Karen, who was there at the beginning and is here now.

And, today, my thanks, of course, to the enterprise and the remarkable *capacities* of Rachel Beetz. I had not thought about hearing these three works together, but she did.

– Roger Reynolds
Del Mar, February 2012