

A life of many hats

February 8, 2015 2:00 PM (Film screening at 1:30)
Conrad Prebys Music Center Experimental Theater
University of California – San Diego

16 Walking Dances – Sarah Brumgart

Drawing II

Parker Notch – Peter Ablinger

Drawing I

Morte tamburo – Salvatore Sciarrino

Drawing V

imAge/flute – Roger Reynolds
US Premiere

Drawing III

Monolith – Vinko Globokar

Drawing IV

Music for Sarah – John Fonville
in six movements

Drawing VI

California Score – Peter Ablinger

Trying on your shoes. Wearing too many hats. We are all familiar with the phrase “trying on your shoes.” Here, we say that we temporarily try out someone's life for a moment. The experience is almost always illuminating. But it is temporary. After a bit, we get to take off the shoes and return to our own self-identifying way of life.

However, I often find myself saying, “I'm wearing too many hats.” Now, I don't actually have a lot of hats, maybe a total of four. The “hats” are metaphorical. Like the shoes metaphor, the wearing of the hats is temporary. However, there seems to be some residual thoughts from trying on each hat. Perhaps it has something to do with the hat being so close to the brain...

Some days I find I must fulfill so many different roles that I'm overwhelmed and confused at the end of the day. Did I accomplish anything today? I was so busy that I'm not sure I did. It is rare for me to have a day to be a flutist, to wake up and think only about about my instrument. Now, this isn't a terrible thing! It is a rewarding life to have other responsibilities. But I'm finding more that this main role “flutist” gets lost in the pile of all of the other hats. So I chose to make a recital that explored what it meant to “try on your shoes” and “wear too many hats” in terms of a flutist.

Each piece on this performance is rooted in either of those phrases. Pieces such as Ablinger's *Parker Notch*, Fonville's *Music for Sarah*, and Globokar's *Monolith* were created from the idiomatic practices of specific performers, Charlie Parker, John Fonville and Karl-Bernhard Sebon, respectively. In contrast, I worked for several weeks with Roger Reynolds on his *imAge* and many of the techniques are idiomatic to how I think of the flute. In this performance, I also challenge myself to experience new ways of performing with Ablinger's *A California Score*. In them, I find new ways of applying my classical musical training to different mediums, thus trying on some new hats.

As I prepared this concert, a certain intensity regarding the physicality of flute playing appeared. In trying to steep myself in the idiosyncratic tricks of these performers, I found I was straining physically to re-create the sounds. Unlike when I've worked more from the score, there was more of something “in the air.” It was as if the presence of that performer was in the room with me at all times. There was an added pressure to find the right technique and affect due to the influence of these legendary performers.

It took me awhile to not be disappointed with my imitations. Nothing will be as great as the original. Eventually, I found ways to make these pieces and techniques my own, which is probably part of every learning process, but it was more present for me this time due to the heavy influence of specific performers.

This whole process has me wondering what can I do that could be as powerful as these performers? What can I bring to the flute that could challenge it? This leads me down a bit of a different path than before. It has released from the pressures of learning “repertoire.” While that will always be there, now I feel more inspiration to make new works with others and on my own. What else could be done?

California Score (2001) – Peter Ablinger

Sheets of paper on the floor, various materials, dimensions: 7m x 10.5m;
performance, address, and exhibition;
ca. 25' and an open end

Drawing I-VI (2014) – Rachel Beetz & Nichole Speciale

These sonic “drawings” are a continuation of my collaboration *Script-Rescript* with artist Nichole Speciale in which sound and drawing are translated back and forth like in a game of telephone. Speciale's *Script-Rescript* drawings were made as a response to a concert I curated in February of 2014. With these drawings, Speciale performed gestures of iteration: one mark tries to follow a musical line in each of the pieces on the concert and following marks try to repeat the first, but ultimately get translated into a new form that echo the preceding. I made the fixed audio pieces based on Speciale's *Script-Rescript* drawings. I assigned a sound to each of Speciale's gestures, which were then measured within the proportions of the page and put into a two minute framework. The translation of the *Script-Rescript* drawings into a flute piece (some with sine tones and white noise) created a completely new sonic landscape for the flute. It is interesting to me how these recordings were made a year ago, before I began work on this recital, but the sounds in these drawings are rooted in the pieces on this program. But how could they be? I didn't know them yet!

You can see the drawings as a part of emergent art space's online exhibition *Translations* at <http://emergentartspace.org/translations-online/#&panel1-20>
– Rachel Beetz

16 Walking Dances

Choreography and Performance by Sarah Brumgart
Costumes by Sarah Brumgart
Music: *Music for Sarah* by John Fonville
Songs for Sarah by Michael Blair
Album *OTB (Craps)* by Jim Staley with John Zorn (Lumina Records LTD)

Parker Notch (2010) – Peter Ablinger

The instrumental part is a sort of automatic transcription from a record of Charlie Parker playing "Lester Leaps In". The original record constitutes itself as one layer of the piece, but is treated by a "notch filter" that erases the area from 200-1100Hz, the fundamental pitches of Parker's playing. The notch makes room for the instrumentalist's "Karaoke", which in fact is highly virtuosic - the tempo is M.M.347 - but even so, almost nothing of that can be really heard: Not the solo, nor the "accompanying" tune. Both are almost completely wrapped into a dominating static noise containing the totality of sounds from the original record, merged into a single monochrome noise colour.

– Peter Ablinger

Morte tamburo (1999) – Salvatore Sciarrino

“Death drum”

“With me, music inhabits a liminal region. Like dreams where something both exists and does not yet exist, and exists in something else as well.”

– Salvatore Sciarrino

imAge/flute (2014) – Roger Reynolds

The *image* series involves brief complimentary works for a variety of instruments. *imageE/...* is “evocative”, lyrical, symmetrical, continuous, and even tender than *imAge/...*, which is “articulate”, sectional, tending towards assertion and variety.

imAge/flute should be performed as assertively and dynamically as possible. Dynamic markings are relative to the performance techniques. An incisive and forceful outcome is always desirable.

Certain sections of *image/flute* owe a debt to John Fonville with whom I worked out the microtonal fingerings.

– Roger Reynolds

Monolith (1978) – Vinko Globokar

For me there is a certain conflict of intensity in this work. There is something comical about both the singing throughout as well as the switching of instruments. Also, there seems to be a hint of playing on the flute and voice sequenzas, or at least a reference to the style of writing from the time. However, the title and the sound that is created is entirely serious. Instead of being in counterpoint, the vocal part creates levels of distortion in the flute sound (or vice-versa). The parts crossfade from a busy flute and vocal drone to a busy voice and flute drone. Overall, the process of the piece creates a solid sonic figure, an aural monolith.

– Rachel Beetz

Music for Sarah (1981) – John Fonville

Dancer Sarah Brumgart asked me for music and *Music for Sarah* is the response. The music is directly influenced by her technical and emotional abilities as a dancer and choreographer. The extended techniques for flute are aligned with her isolation skills, her interest in all kinds of dance from around the world, and her ability to perform on several levels simultaneously. The musical framework is primarily based on non-Western sources.

- I. This movement is indebted to Nyozan Miyagawa's composition *Ajikan* for shakuhachi. The movement is an exploration of sound patterns and inherent counterpoint found in bi-phonics. The tube is gradually pushed to the limits of air acceptance.
- II. Rim fingerings are used to simulate a bamboo flute. These fingerings generate polymetric patterns by using left-right hand finger oppositions. As the speed increases, the hands become more independent. Eventually the flute sound stops while the fingers continue clicking, using the same type of finger opposition. Tongue rams are used to suggest another state of exultation which ends the movement.
- III. With the foot-joint removed and the tube stopped, the flute produces an E below middle C. This movement explores the interactions of the harmonics between the voice and the stopped tube. One might make an association with Tibetan chant.
- IV. Flute and vocal sounds alternate (hocket) in an ostinato pattern. The differences in timbre create shifts in meter and stress. The voice is ingressive singing so that there are no breaks in texture. The work is directly influenced by a young woman from a pygmy tribe.
- V. With the head-joint removed, the flute is played in a similar manner as the shakuhachi. The shortened flute produces a scale of about 130 cents between tones. The scale used might be associated with a Javanese scale. Manual and finger vibrato are used in opposition.
- VI. A self-reflecting system of Italian origin enjoys a luau.

– John Fonville