

Folias Program Notes, March 2010

ANDREW BERGERON

Born May 24, 1978, Holland, MI.

Full Long Nights Moon was written after the return from a cross-country skiing trip to central Ontario in December 2009. While on the trip, Andrew and I had the unexpected pleasure of skiing one night when the moon happened to be full. The naming of full moons date back to Native Americans who would keep track of the seasons by giving each of the full moons throughout the year a distinct name. Musically, the piece explores ostinatos which are played independently and on top of one another. The piece begins in 10/8 and then continues in 4/4 with a culminating section that has 6/8 in the guitar and vibes underneath soaring flute passages that are sextuplets offset by one eighth note with each repetition. Andrew says that he was thinking of Pat Metheny's jazz harmony when he drafted the piece.

GEORGE CRUMB

Born October 24, 1929, Charleston, West Virginia.

George Crumb's **Mundus Canis** came about in 1998 when he wanted to write a solo guitar piece for his friend David Starobin that would be a musical homage to the lineage of Crumb family dogs. He explains, "It occurred to me that the feline species has been disproportionately memorialized in music and I wanted to help redress the balance." Crumb calls the work "a suite of five canis humoresques" with a character study of each dog implied through the music. Each of the five movements is named after one of the family dogs:

Crumb Writes:

1. "Tammy, a brown, short-haired, full-size dachshund, and the first dog in our family, exhibited qualities ranging from nobility to capriciousness."
2. "Fritzi's piece, marked *furioso* in the score, expresses a pronounced impetuosity and irrepressibility of spirit."
3. "The dog Heidel (acquired on a visit to Heidelberg, Germany) was our first long-haired specimen of the breed, a rich brown in color, who exhibited a philosophical disposition and confounding depths of personality."
4. "Emma-Jean was a jet black miniature female dachshund of a definitely coquettish nature."
5. "The final character in our quintet of dogs is Yoda, who was rescued from a New York City pound by my daughter. He is a fluffy-white animal of mixed parentage (in which the *bichon frise* strain predominates) and mercurial temperament... Yoda's naughty, yet endearing, pranks necessitate an occasional scolding from master or mistress. But in an instant, all forgiven, Yoda plops in one's lap!"

Mundus Canis was first performed by David Starobin (guitar) and George Crumb (percussion) in Cannes, France on January 20, 1998.

MICHAEL HEDGES

Born December 31, 1953, Enid, Oklahoma.

Died December 2, 1997, Mendocino County, California.

Breakfast in the Field was written by Michael Hedges in his native Oklahoma one morning while practicing guitar in a country field at sunrise. Like many of Michael Hedges other compositions, this piece uses slap harmonics, right hand hammer-ons and left hand pull offs. It also uses an unconventional guitar tuning, CGDDAE, which is a combination that Hedges says is inspired by the harmonic language of Béla Bartók. Michael Hedges composed and played his pieces almost exclusively in alternate tunings; you can imagine how much talking he did on stage to distract the audience while he tuned up for every piece! A database that contains over forty of Hedge's tunings can be found at his website nomadland.com.

CARMEN MARET

Born April 12, 1979 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

I drafted the **Rock Etudes** while Andrew and I were on a six night backpacking trip in Canyonlands National Park in Utah. My idea for the piece was to create a set of etudes based on the color classification of the geological formations in the park. Before departing, I created a pitch set for each rock color using the *Munsell* system, a color categorization system adopted for soil research in the 1930s that was developed by Professor Albert H. Munsell.

A particular flute and guitar technique was also assigned to each basic color in the system giving a timbral sound palate for each composite color:

Color	Guitar	Flute
Greyish Orange Pink	Sul tasto Repeated notes Chords	Stacatto Singing Timbre Trills
Blackish Red	Pizzacatto Trills	Stacatto Trills
Pale Orange	Repeated Notes	Singing
Dusky Brown	Ponticello	Slap Tongue
Greyish Olive	Sul tasto Tremolo	Stacatto Tremolo
Dusky Green	Strumming	Flutter Tongue

The end result is that each etude exists in its own little world, first as a result of the derived pitch set and second from the specific techniques used for the flute and guitar. Much like Béla Bartók's *Microkosmos*, the self imposed limitations here provide an opportunity to focus on each technique and pitch set to bring about a pedagogical exploration for composer and performer.

Canyonlands National Park itself inspired much of the motivic material for the etudes. There are twenty-five rock colors in all, and the six are presented here were drafted with pencil and paper while backpacking. Bird calls, the echo off canyon walls, insects, wind, and planned silences all capture a sense of "natural" time, as opposed to the more mechanized sense of time in our urban life. The music of Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu has had an impressionable influence here, especially his work for alto flute and guitar, *Toward the Sea*.

Here are some musical examples that show the timbral techniques and pitch set permutations:

An example of bird calls created by accelerating and decelerating groups of 5 and 7.

Flute
Greyish Orange Pink
Guitar

The terraced dynamics here mimic the echo created off of a canyon wall.

Blackish Red

The sound of night music is created with ponticello and slap tongue.

Dusky Brown

Pitch set and its permutation between flute and guitar lines

Greyish Yellow

The top flute line is descending in thirds and in retrograde of the pitch set, while the guitar line is ascending thirds using the ascending order of the pitch set.

MARTA PTASZYNSKA

Born 1943 in Warsaw, Poland.

Marta Ptaszynska is an international known composer, percussionist and professor at the University of Chicago. Ptaszynska's **Cadenza** was written in 1972 and is one of her early chamber music works for flute and percussion. The work uses a pitch set based on 01237 with repeated motives using half steps followed by tri-tones; the phrases in the piece are reminiscent

of Edgar Varese's ground breaking solo flute work *Density 21.5*. Structurally, *Cazenza* uses an arch form with the metronome marking for the quarter note as follows: 60 - 72 - 104 - 120 - 104 - 80 - 72 - 60. It is scored for flute, alto flute, piccolo and an ensemble of percussion: vibes, marimba, 2 timpani, 2 tom toms, 2 tam tams, 2 cymbals.

In addition to being a prolific composer, Ptaszynska is co-author of the book *Colorful World of Percussion* (1978) a book for percussion training in 5 volumes.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

Born March 11, 1921 in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

Died July 4, 1992 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Astor Piazzolla is perhaps Argentina's most infamous tango composer and bandoneónist known not only for his tango performances in concert halls but also for merging tango with jazz, something that still receives mixed affections especially from social tango dancers. Perhaps the continued popularity of Piazzolla's compositions is that while they maintain the percussive grit of tango dance hall music they can also be played by musicians of different performing genres who combine the skills of polished music reading with improvisational soloing.

Détresse (distress) or in Spanish Apuro (trouble), arranged here for solo vibes, is one of Piazzolla's tango songs from 1961 with lyrics by French poet Roger Desbois. The lyrics are typical tango fare, a first person narrative that speaks of lost love and the hope for redemption:

When July, taking the arms of summer, settles beautiful days
in the sky to sing love, your kisses, that I believed forgotten,
blow, ah, our ancient happiness into my heart

But I leave with a crossed heart, a heart without joy, because
your depart makes me sad, sad

Through my nights, it is distress and boredom that eternally
torment the heart of my life

Echoing the bird's song shouting joy without reason, the joy
of lovers

The under-growth resounds with your voice, your voice that I
hear so low in the depths of myself

But I would like to erase these thoughts, so that love can sing
and come

What a beautiful day when happiness, in turn, will take me
far from here, to the heart of life

The **Solo Flute etude No. 1** follows a typical ABA dance form. It starts in a minor, continues with a forceful f minor middle section and ends surprisingly in c minor. The etude is marked *decide* (decided) and uses many permutations of the 3-3-2 milonga rhythm that, despite gymnastic leaps in the flute, can be heard throughout.

Milonga del ángel was written by Piazzolla for Alberto Rodriguez Muñoz's 1962 stage play *Tango del Ángel* in which an angel heals the spirits of the residents of a slum in Buenos Aires. Milonga is a multi-layered word that means many different things in the tango world:

- Milonga is the dueling song and dance form that came out of the river plain region of Argentina in the 1880s that eventually merged with tango. This milonga is often thought of as the predecessor to tango.
- Milonga is a rhythm that sounds like a faster version of the habanera from Cuba; think of Bizet's character *Carmen* singing her famous aria here but with the bass part sped up.
- Milonga is a type of dance with its own vocabulary that dancers perform at tango dances.
- Milonga is a word used to refer to the dance event itself. As in, "let's go dance at the milonga tonight!"

Piazzolla's music is steeped in milonga, which is what gives his music both a deeply rooted connection to the history of tango, and also a point of trajectory. Let's take a look at some permutations of the milonga rhythm:



To offer a comparison with Piazzolla's music, we have arranged **Silueta Porteña**, a traditional milonga still danced to today at tango dances. Written in the 19teens by the Cuccaro brothers, the title refers to a portrait (silhouette) of a woman from Buenos Aires, the "port" city in South America where tango originated. Calling someone a "porteña" or "porteño" today would be like calling someone a New Yorker, a slang name that carries with it the stereotype of a humongous metropolis, such as Buenos Aires is. With a 2009 population of 14.5 million people, Buenos Aires is third in South America only to Mexico City and São Palo. (By comparison, New York City only has 8.4 million people!)

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

Born March 5, 1887 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Died November 17, 1959 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Heitor Villa-Lobos is Brazil's most important composer of western art music in the 20th century and an important contributor to the classical guitar repertoire. He was an accomplished guitarist and many of his compositions were born out of his guitar improvisations and out of his connection to Brazilian folk music. He met Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia in the 1920s, and as a result was commissioned by Segovia to write a set of twelve etudes each that deal with a different guitar technique. **Etude No. 1** was composed in 1929 and showcases arpeggio technique on the guitar. Our arrangement here has an added composed flute line with supporting percussion. The idea for this version is inspired by the album *Nylon and Steel* the features an improvised version of the etude performed by Manuel Barrueco and Steve Morse.

CELSON MACHADO

Born January 27, 1953 in Ribeirão Preto, Brazil

Brazilian performer, composer and teacher Celso Machado publishes many classical music collections that utilize world folk melodies and dance rhythms. **Sambossa** is from Machado's Suite Popular Brasileira (suite of popular music from Brazil), no doubt following and developing the earlier example set by Villa-Lobos who wrote his Suite Populaire Brésilienne for solo guitar between the years of 1908 –1912. Sambossa is written in the style of a bossa nova, but with a twist, as the word implies; sambo is a person from the Caribbean who is of mixed indigenous and African heritage.

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