

IN TWO WORLDS
Exploring the duality of music and society
2024

John Sampen, saxophone
Mark Bunce, composer/engineer

PROGRAM NOTES

FOUR 5 (1992).....John Cage

John Cage is one of the seminal figures of modern culture, a composer and philosopher who has considered and challenged the basic assumptions and boundaries of the art of music. His early conclusion that the path of modern music lay along the lines of rhythmic innovation rather than pitch structures led him to an interest in percussion music, noise resources and electro-acoustic music. Cage’s later works sought to remove his own ego and all personal control over sounds through a variety of ingenious “chance” devices. He became the founder and leading exponent of musical indeterminacy, and perhaps the first American “art music composer” to initiate a major musical trend.

During John Cage’s guest appearance at the 7th BGSU New Music & Art Festival (1986), John Sampen suggested a new work for saxophones. *FOUR 5* was completed in December 1991 and represents one of Cage’s last compositions before his death in August 1992. The work was premiered by Sampen and the BGSU American Saxophone Ensemble at the 10th World Saxophone Congress in Pesaro, Italy (1992). John Cage’s twelve-minute work is scored for soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones with parts consisting of approximately fifteen pitches (each on a single line).

TROPE (2007/2008).....Marilyn Shrude

The music of Chicago-born composer Marilyn Shrude is recognized for its “shimmering sounds” and “sensuous beauty.” Her many honors are those from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and from the Kennedy Center Freidheim Awards. Active as a composer, pianist, teacher, and contemporary music advocate, Shrude has consistently promoted American music through her many years directing both the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music and the Bowling Green State University New Music & Art Festival.

The trope had its origin in the Middle Ages, at which time it was often the practice to embellish a traditional liturgical text (e.g., Introit, Kyrie, Gradual, etc.) with the insertion of another. These interpolations or tropes served as “commentaries” on the main text and were not meant to change the meaning or character. The consequent musical settings resulted in a body of literature that gained significance in later years.

The famous protest song, “We Shall Overcome,” serves as the source material for Shrude’s *TROPE*. The actual melody is deeply embedded in the meditative musical texture, and, though not easily recognizable, reflects its sentiment and passion.

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION (1991)James
Mobberley

James Mobberley is professor of music and director of the Music Production and Computer Technology Center in the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He has served as the Kansas City Symphony's Composer-in-Residence and his awards include a Guggenheim, The Rome Prize and a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

His *SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION* for alto saxophone and fixed media resembles a concerto for him/herself, exhibiting all the dramatic relationships of any concerto, such as solo and "tutti" passages, and changing relationships between the participants (leader, follower, antagonist, partner). The title describes the volatile, unpredictable, and highly-charged character of the piece, which is built on horizontal and vertical layerings of small ideas that interact and interlock to form a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. The video imaging accompanying the performance has recently been prepared by artist/musician Michiko Saiki.

SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT (2008).....Mark Bunce

Mark Bunce is a composer, recording engineer/electronics technician for the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music and Director of Recording Services at Bowling Green State University. A veteran of the recording industry for over 35 years, Bunce has engineered innumerable compact discs and recordings and has composed soundtracks for award-winning corporate videos and PBS signatures.

SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT was created especially for concert tours with John Sampen in 2008. The composition is based on the composer's interest in the sub-atomic world and the beginnings of the universe. The opening of the piece grows from "nothingness" and builds to a huge moment of chaos, representing the birth of the universe. This disordered state is sustained, reflecting the quickly expanding cosmos, but gradually it is replaced by harmonic stability as the universe reaches its present quantum state. The title represents a "thought" experiment constructed by the eminent Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger. His famous theory explains the multiple states of quantum particles or systems. Here, an imaginary cat is placed in a sealed, windowless box where its survival is connected to a subatomic particle. The outside observer is unable to monitor the cat's life or death until opening the cage; thus the cat is "theoretically" both alive and dead until the box is opened and examined. Shrodinger's experiment represents the possible states of unmeasured systems or particles.

DISTANCE (1972).....Toru
Takemitsu

Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996) was largely a self-taught composer who considered Debussy as his main influence and "teacher." He wrote extensively for the movie industry (90 films) as well as commissions for the New York Philharmonic and other prestigious orchestras. *DISTANCE* was originally a composition for oboe and optional *sho* and was reworked for soprano saxophone by the composer and by Claude Delangle. Liner notes by Per Broman (Bis CD 640/1994) speak of the incessant line of the Japanese *sho* (mouth organ) which "continues behind the oboe, suggesting that nothing can stop the breathing of life. The title refers to the

distance between the oboe and *sho* as well as the extreme distances of interval dynamics and articulation.”

As a composer, Takemitsu was generally not interested in creating rapid or frantic music. *DISTANCE* is no exception as the composition unfolds in a slow and “timeless” fashion, incorporating contemporary techniques reminiscent of Schoenberg’s *Klangfarbenmelodie*. “Takemitsu’s conception of time is certainly relevant to this piece: whereas the modern Western concept of time is linear in nature, that is, its continuance always maintains the same state, in Japan time is perceived as a circulating and repeating entity” (Broman). *DISTANCE* is performed here with an interactive *sho* as recorded by David Badagnani. The background visual photographs represent the composer’s love for Japanese rock gardens.

A SHORT LECTURE ON THE SAXOPHONE (1979).....William Bolcom

Seattle-born composer and pianist William Bolcom studied with Darius Milhaud at Mills College and completed his doctorate in composition from Stanford in 1964. To date, he has been featured on nearly 40 albums as both performer and composer and is winner of several Grammy Awards. Bolcom has taught composition at the University of Michigan since 1973 and is the recipient of honorary doctorates from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Albion College, and of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his “*12 New Etudes*” for piano. He is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

William Bolcom’s *SHORT LECTURE ON THE SAXOPHONE* is a satire on the saxophone and its infamous past. Written in 1979 for John Sampen’s premiere at the 6th World Saxophone Congress (Evanston, Illinois), the music is laced with unexpected theatrical exploits, humorous verbal anecdotes and original saxophone excerpts.

IN TWO WORLDS (1988).....Morton Subotnick

Morton Subotnick is considered one of the “fathers” or pioneers in the development of electronic music and his work utilizes many of the important technological breakthroughs in the history of the genre. Perhaps Subotnick’s most famous creation was *SILVER APPLES OF THE MOON* (1967), a work representing the first original large-scale composition created specifically for the disc medium. In the 1970s, he created the “ghost” box, a device which controlled electronic processing for the live performer. More recently, Subotnick has developed electronic musical tools for young children.

Composed in 1988 for John Sampen and a consortium of saxophonists, *IN TWO WORLDS* is essentially a “concerto” for alto saxophone, computer and (in its optional version) orchestra. Subotnick’s initial setting of the score also included wind controller which was omitted in the final versions. The title refers both to the duality of the media (computer and traditional instruments) and to the synthesis of modal concepts and more recent musical materials. This large-scale work casts the saxophonist in an heroic role, performing a variety of romantic and virtuosic passages. State-of-the-art technology allows the soloist to interact with the computer through use of a manual foot pedal.

Program Credits

- John Cage’s readings from the CD “Indeterminacy,” Smithsonian/Folkways 40804/1992
- Shrupe reading from T.S.Eliot “Burnt Norton” (“Four Quartets”) in The Complete Poems

and Plays by T.S.Eliot (NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1971), p.121.

- Recording artists for Shrude's TROPE – James Fusik, Jeff Heisler, and John Sampen
- Visual conception and animation for Shrude's TROPE by Marilyn Shrude and Tim Stulman
- Video imaging for SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION created/produced by Michiko Saiki with permission from the composer
- Video for Mark Bunce's SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT created/produced by Glenn Burris and Mark Bunce
- Photos for GOODNIGHT NOISES EVERYWHERE from "Goodnight Moon" by Margaret Wise Brown with pictures by Clement Hurd (published by HarperCollins). Other photos/posters collected from "Art Against War" by Bruckner/Chwast/Heller and from various internet sources
- Remarks by Takemitsu from an interview with classical music announcer/producer Bruce Duffie, recorded in Chicago (1990) (www.bruceduffie.com)
- Photos for Takemitsu's DISTANCE by Mizuno Katsuhiko in "The Gardens of Kyoto"
- *Sho* recorded sounds (Takemitsu' DISTANCE) by performed by David Badagnani
- Preparation of electronics for the interactive *sho* by Mark Bunce
- Electronic rendering of Subotnick's IN TWO WORLDS by Jeff Heisler/Mark Bunce
- Program sponsored in part by the Conn-Selmer Company and Légère Reeds