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Artful Devices: Music for Piano and Computers

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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ARTFUL DEVICES
Music for Piano and Computers

Performed by
Daniel Koppelman
and
Benjamin Broening

SEPTEMBER 23, 2002, 7:30 PM
CAMP CONCERT HALL
BOOKER HALL OF MUSIC

$\cdots$ PROGRAM $\cdots$

Voices: In Memoriam for piano and computer
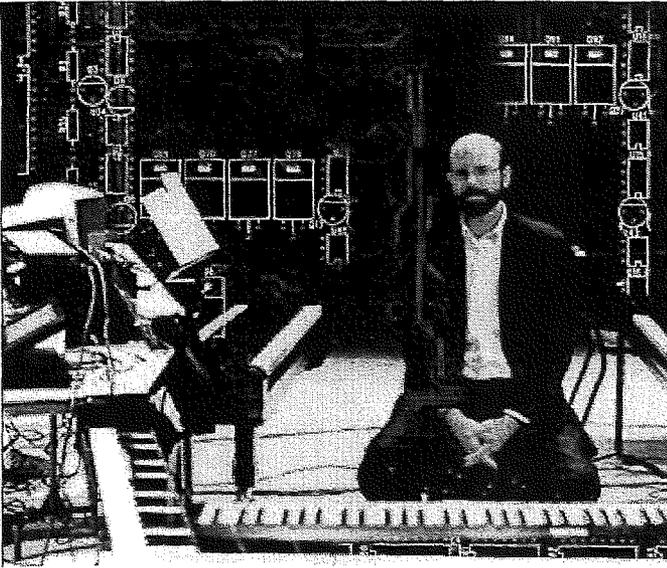James Mobberley

Unnatural Selection for MTC Express and computer
Christopher Dobrian

digitalisman for piano, MTC Express and computer
Daniel Koppelman

Psychic Driving for piano and computer
Eric Lyon

Nocturne/Doubles for piano and computer
Benjamin Broening

Four Preludes for solo piano
Wayne Peterson

Born in New York and raised in California, *Daniel Koppelman* has gained experience with many different musical traditions—classical and popular, composed and improvised, acoustic and electronic—which has led him to explore their intersections in search of new possibilities for performing, teaching, and creating music. Koppelman's current performance interests include the Tactex MTC Express multi-touch controller in conjunction with Cycling '74's Max/MSP and STEIM's LiSa (live sampling) software, real-time digital signal processing of acoustic piano, and the multiple keyboard ensemble duo runedako (with Ruth Neville). He has recorded for CRI, New World Records, Neuma Records, Capstone and C74; he also released a disc of original electroacoustic compositions distributed by CDeMusic.

Koppelman holds degrees from San Francisco State University (B.M.), Indiana University (M.M.), and the University of California at San Diego (Ph.D.), where he was a Regents Fellow; his teachers have included Wayne Peterson, Harvey Sollberger, and James Tocco. Currently Associate Professor and Director of Music Technology at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, Koppelman has recently been invited for two residencies focusing on the design of a new tactile system for real-time electroacoustic music performance: in June-July 2002 at the Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (STEIM) in Amsterdam, and in January-February 2003 at the Center for Research in Computing and the Arts (CRCA) in La Jolla, CA.

Benjamin Broening's compositions have been widely performed across the United States and in Europe and Asia. He has written works for many media, including orchestral, choral, chamber and electroacoustic music.

Recent pieces include a work for clarinet and piano commissioned by the Band and Orchestral Division of Yamaha Corporation of America for Arthur Campbell, a work for clarinet and computer for F. Gerard Errante and a choral/orchestral work for the Connecticut Choral Society and the Grace Choral Society of Brooklyn. Other recent commissions include a cantata for the Charlotte Symphony and the Oratorio Singers of Charlotte, a clarinet concerto for the Interlochen Arts Academy Wind Ensemble, a multi-media cantata for Hampton-Sydney College, chamber works for Quorum Chamber Arts Collective and Currents new music ensemble, three choral works for the Virginia Glee Club, an orchestral piece for the Riccioti Ensemble (Netherlands), music for theatre and dance, as well as numerous solo works for performers around the country.

His *Variations/Doubles* for saxophone and computer has been released on the Equilibrium label, *Via Negativa: The Cloud of Forgetting* has been released on the Centaur label, and his *Arioso and Arioso/Doubles* will be released on the Centaur label in 2003. Broening is the founder and artistic director of Third Practice, an annual national festival of computer and electronic music at the University of Richmond where he is Assistant Professor of Music and Director of the Computer Music Studios.

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James Mobberley *Voices: In Memoriam*

This work began as a commission from two wonderful and talented pianists: Leah Hokanson and Daniel Koppelman, both of whom have performed my music on a variety of occasions for many years, and both of whom are extraordinarily gifted interpreters of contemporary music. It also served as a re-entry for me into the world of instruments-with-electronics, which I had not worked in for four years. The medium of choice for 2001 is undoubtedly interactive electronics, where a computer system "listens" to the live performer and provides further interpretation and commentary on the instrument's sound world. The advantage over pre-recorded materials is one of freedom for the performer, where the computer 'accompanist' reacts to the instrument's sounds, rather than the reverse.

I had just started the composition when the attacks took place on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, and by a month later I found myself making little progress. During a trip to New York in October, 2001 I found myself making a pilgrimage of sorts to the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where I discovered a chapel area which had been dedicated, apparently for many years, to the Firefighters of New York. There I saw special displays by school children, a newspaper tribute to the 343 firefighters who were killed at the World Trade Center, and, most significant, I saw a letter, bravely hand-written by a school-age youngster to his father, who had been killed. Its sentiments were at once universal and specific — lauding a hero's bravery and looking forward to a distant but much anticipated reunion. This, more than any of the television coverage, newspaper reports, or memorial ceremonies, brought home to me the full impact of this tragedy on the individual and collective spirit.

I decided, even before leaving the cathedral, that I needed to start over — that this work should somehow memorialize these firefighters. Hence the tones of the piano honor their voices and create a sound

world, while the computer does what computers do best – hold these voices in memory, and bring these memories back, changed – as memories always are – by time and by new experiences and associations. The piece itself is an example of this process of change: once the voices have been stated, there is a significant change of mood, and the sound world of the piece changes its context completely. Yet memory persists and, in the end, brings us inevitably back to these now-silent yet very audible voices. In fact, our memories argue convincingly that nothing that we love ever really leaves us.—J.M.

Christopher Dobrian *Unnatural Selection*

In *Unnatural Selection* Daniel Koppelman improvises freely on Tactex MTC Express touch-pad. The synthesizer music is performed by an improvising computer program inspired by the computation technique known as a genetic algorithm, which takes a set of possibilities and generates new ones by recombining aspects of the old ones. The notes played by the human performer become a population of possibilities from which the program derives its musical material. The data from the touch-pad is interpreted by the program, which derives information about the pitches and rhythms being played, and produces a closely related accompaniment. The program "learns" the music on the spot, at the moment it is played by the human performer, and joins in with a synthesizer accompaniment it improvises based on the music it receives. Thus, the human performer has the ability to influence the computer's composition in real time, but cannot wholly determine it. Since the accompaniment is composed at that moment, the performer has never heard it before and is required to interact with this new sonic environment.—C.D.

Daniel Koppelman *digitalisman*

digital, *adj.* **1.** of, pertaining to, or resembling a digit or finger. **2.** performed or manipulated with a finger: *a digital switch.* **3.** having digits or digitlike parts. **4.** of, pertaining to, or using data in the form of numerical digits: *a digital recording.* -n. **8.** one of the keys or finger levers of keyboard instruments.

digitalis, *n*. **1.** any plant of the genus *Digitalis*, of the figwort family, esp. the foxglove, *D. purpurea*. **2.** the dried leaves of the foxglove used as a heart stimulant.

talisman, *n*. **1.** an object engraved with figures supposed to possess occult powers, worn as a charm. **2.** anything that exercises a powerful or magical influence.

digitalisman, *n*. **1.** a composition played with fingers on acoustic and digital instruments which might stimulate the heart and/or exercise a powerful or magical influence on listeners and/or the performer. —D.K. (and Webster)

Eric Lyon *Psychic Driving*

Psychic Driving is a method employed after the original personality has been excised through standard brain washing techniques. Tapes are played continuously to the subject, inculcating a new personality with the desired characteristics. Personality replacement is the first step towards behavior modifications which are in the best interests of society. —E.L.

Benjamin Broening *Nocturne/Doubles*

Nocturne/Doubles for Piano and Computer is the second in a series of works for instrument and computer. *Doubles* is a term used in 17th and early 18th century French music for a technique of variation in which more or less elaborate ornamentation is added to the original melody, while the supporting harmonies remain the same. The *Doubles* series takes this idea as its starting point and applies the variation technique to the timbre of the soloist as well as the pitched material. The computer also responds to the piano's music; sometimes confirming (doubling) and summarizing, sometimes extending, altering or recontextualizing the piano's melodic and harmonic material.—B.P.B.

Wayne Peterson *Four Preludes for Solo Piano*

My *Preludes* were completed in December of year 2000. They are dedicated to the acclaimed pianist David Holzman who encouraged their creation. My goal was to write a group of straightforward pieces which were united by a common musical language. While the *Preludes* are formally coherent in an abstract sense they all bear programmatic titles suggestive of a scenario or mood.

Maelstrom endeavors to capture the terror of the violent tornadoes I experienced while growing up in the flat agricultural country of southern Minnesota. In this prelude moments of uneasy tranquility alternate with sudden, tempestuous outbursts which eventually climax and dissipate, returning to the ominous calm of the beginning.

Fading Embers was inspired by evocative lines from a ninth century Chinese poet, Li Shang-yin: "Dreams of remote partings, cries which cannot summon..." In short, *Fading Embers* is a wistful, nostalgic reawakening of poignant events buried in the past.

The overall form is binary. The first section contains three parts: a quiet, reflective opening, a passionate, cadenza-like outcry and an abbreviated return to the beginning. Then, high distant bells, gradually becoming more insistent, merge into sensuous harmonies upon their descent. Immediately after they dissolve into pianissimo fragments, the tolling bells return a final time to close the piece with funereal inflections.

Strictly speaking, *Valse Sumbliminale* is not a traditional waltz. It is, rather, a series of surrealistic, often mercurial, flashbacks concerning various aspects of the waltz repertoire which have produced vivid impressions on me. Throughout the work are indirect references to the music of Brahms, Berg, Ravel, and Bill Evans.

The form is quite clear. A short fanfare sets the stage for (1) a broad, expressionistic melody that is cut short by (2) brief allusions to a fast jazz waltz. There follows a transition consisting of an agitated, rhythmically irregular melody in the bass. Ascending to the upper register, it leads to (3) concluding, fortissimo motifs reminiscent of *La Valse*. These three components are expository. Two variations en-

sue which greatly extend and develop this material—particularly that pertaining to the jazz waltz and the Ravel motifs. A high point culminating in a brilliant presto flourish brings the piece to a resounding conclusion.

Caccia is an Italian word meaning chase. The early Trecento applied the term to poetry dealing with the hunt, and to music which portrayed the hunt via extended imitative passages (canons). Instead of counterpoint, however, this prelude's scenario focuses primarily upon a victim trying desperately to elude its predator. Midway there is a brief, nervous respite—as if the quarry has at last found secure cover. This illusion is abruptly shattered and the pursuit resumes with renewed ferociousness. A volatile cadenza spells the beginning of the end. The victim, becoming progressively weaker, finally stumbles and meets its demise in the clutches of the predator. —W.P.

2002-2003 Concerts
Call 289-8980 for ticket information

Shanghai Quartet
With Ida Kavafian, viola
Wednesday, September 25, 2002, 7:30 pm
Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music

Formed at the Shanghai Conservatory in 1983, the Shanghai Quartet remains the only quartet from China to be performing on the world's stages. They are joined in concert by Ida Kavafian, whose versatility has gained her a unique position in the music world. Their program will feature Mozart's Viola Quintet in G minor, K 516, and Brahms's Viola Quintet in F major, op 88.

Karen Johnson, violin
Mark Russell Smith, cello
Molly Sharp, viola
Joanne Kong, piano
Thursday, September 26, 2002, 7:30 pm
Camp Concert Hall, Booker Hall of Music

Appointed last season as the Richmond Symphony's new concertmaster, violinist Karen Johnson is featured in a program of solo and chamber works including a Baroque trio sonata, the Sonata for Violin and Piano by John Corigliano, Paganini's La Campanella and Brahms's Piano Quartet in G minor, Op. 25. Joining her are the symphony's music director, Mark Russell Smith, and violist, Molly Sharp, and Department of Music faculty member Joanne Kong.

Sweet Honey in the Rock
Sunday, September 29, 2002, 7:30 pm
Carpenter Center for the Performing Arts
Sponsored by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation

Few things in this modern life are as enduring as Sweet Honey in the Rock. This a cappella ensemble of six African-American women transcend the technologically enhanced music of the day. Sweet Honey's sound has been described as being like that of a rushing wind, the crashing of waves, an eagle's scream as it soars through the air—natural and forceful—transforming. Their sound is so true to itself that it pierces the hearts and minds of anyone who listens. It even touches those who cannot hear but who can feel and see the music as it is communicated through the fluid hands of a Sign Language interpreter. Special seating available upon request for hearing-impaired patrons.