Williams Symphonic Winds & Chamber Winds

The Sounds of Place

15 November 2008

> Place weaves itself into our lives in the most intimate ways: it determines the food we eat, the clothes we wear, our occupations, diversions, sleep habits, mobility, sense of history, awareness of nature, tolerance for noise and distraction, feelings of security and identification. In a very real sense, place creates us. Place also acts as the backdrop for our most treasured stories about ourselves. It is a part of every experience. While place has affected all peoples and cultures throughout history, in modern times it has played an especially significant role in shaping America's development, values, and identity. The impact of place in this country might not be unique, but it has enjoyed a central position in discussions of American character since the beginning of the union. Whether New World settlers sought religious freedom, commercial advancement, escape, or adventure, America promised a vast place in which to realize dreams.
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> Writers and artists have responded to their environs for centuries and, in the process, communicated essential values of their cultures. As Robert Hughes demonstrated in his book *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America*, three hundred years of painted, photographed, sculpted, built, and drawn images create persuasive narratives. But powerful artistic responses to one's place are not confined to what can be seen on the canvas or read on the page. Music captures places as well. Where painters remember a landscape for its light and shade, the ways in which the colors and shapes animate images, composers hear the rhythms and timbres of a place and recall it in sound. Although sonic images may be more fleeting than painted or sculpted ones, and less specific than prose descriptions, they are no less eloquent or evocative; their commentary is no less poignant. Some might even argue that their lack of material form imbues them with greater profundity.
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> —Denise von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (2003)

In their *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (2003), John Connell and Chris Gibson explore ways in which "many everyday understandings about places are mediated through engagements with [popular] music. Everyday associations with places may come to be defined by musical expressions, on a number of levels…. Myths of place are often reinforced in music itself."

Inspired by these two books, tonight's concert—*Sounds of Place*—is an exploration of ways in which we construct our personal concepts of identity through relationships with places, whether real or metaphorical, debased or idealized. The concert travels a musical journey from the stars (Donald Erb's *Stargazing*) to a landscape entirely devoid of a human footprint (John Adams's "Soledades" from *El Dorado*), with stops along the way in a childhood memory of a pulsating city (John Harbison's *Three City Blocks*), a melancholy stroll through the streets memorialized in the classics of American Beat Culture (Jonathan Newman's *My Hands Are a City*, a mystical re-interpretation an urban district of London where the Thames River flows alongside factories and pubs (Gustav Holst's *Hammersmith*), and a vision of a celestial home (Olivier Messiaen's *La Ville d'en-Haut*). Linking this narrative progression from urban centers to more intimate, personal re-conceptualizations of our relationships to places, are works for works chamber ensembles by David Lang, Ingram Marshall, Eve Beglarian, and John Luther Adams. The urgent plea presented near the concert's end—"I want to live where you live"—takes on greater and more poignant casts when viewed through the prism of the various places where we do live.

Tonight's concert is dedicated to the memory of two composers: Donald Erb — who died on August 12, 2008 at his home in Cleveland Heights at age 81 — and to Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) — whose birth centennial the Williams College Music Department celebrates this semester.

Donald Erb: "The Stars Come Out" from *Stargazing* (1966)

If the music of Donald Erb (1927-2008) is not well-known today, it might simply be because it is utterly unclassifiable. He was not a neo-romantic, minimalist, serialist, populist, and while there are often traces of jazz or aleatoricism in his works, neither of those styles defines his music either; uncategorizable, Erb is a true maverick. As Donald Rosenberg of *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) wrote: "In a world overpopulated by cookie-cutter composers, Erb is an original." The superlatives used to describe Erb and his music, however, are truly astounding: Nicolas Slonimsky in the Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians as a "significant American composer," *Fanfare Magazine* referred to him as "original and imaginative," the American Music Center called Erb a "luminary," and so on.

Perhaps the closest classification of his music would be as an immediate antecedent to the *spectralist* school since not only does much of the affect of his music comes through instrumental coloring, but the shape or forms of many compositions is actually determined primarily by his timbral and orchestration decisions. Stating just this fact, James North of *Fanfare* asserted: "No other composer has such a keen ear for unusual sonorities – Erb turns combinations which appear ridiculous on paper into subtly colored ensembles," while the conductor Catherine Comet stated: "I am sure that in 2094, all music students will learn the art of orchestration from Ravel and from Erb." His orchestral music has been played by literally every major orchestra in the United States, by many eminent ensembles in Europe and Australia, and by such artists as Lynn Harrell, Richard Stoltzman, Stuart Dempster, the Group for Contemporary Music, and the brass section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His composition *The Seventh Trumpet* has been performed more than two hundred times by over fifty orchestras in the United States and abroad, and was chosen as the United States representative to UNESCO in 1970.

Mr. Erb's early interest in electronic music led to the composition of *Reconnaisance*, one of the first chamber works for live synthesizer and acoustic instruments. Written in 1965, *Reconnaisance* was premiered on Music in Our Time in New York with Robert Moog operating the synthesizer, and then presented at Expo '67 in Montreal and on Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles. Mr. Erb not only helped to pioneer the acceptance of electronic sounds in conventional music circles, but also helped to extend the use of traditional instruments beyond their normal limits. His works often require instrumentalists to play in unusual ranges or in unconventional ways — piano strings may be struck with mallets; trumpet mouthpieces may be removed and played without the trumpet. The total effect is extremely colorful, demonstrating the composer's expert sensitivity to sound. Although Erb sometimes used aleatoric methods, his compositions always have form as well as freedom; he never lost control of them. As Mr. Erb once quipped: "A craftsman can create entertainment, but you need more than that to create art. You need an emotional, inspirational quality, because in and of itself craft means nothing. There has to be something inside you pushing out or all a person will ever write is a craftsman-like piece. And that's not quite good enough."

Joseph Rothstein, writing for *The Honolulu Advertiser*, believed that: "Erb's music is not 'about' anything, except the exploration, development, and interplay of musical ideas. His musical constructs are so full of energy, craft and logic that they come to be about the much larger issues art addresses." This is certainly true of his ***Stargazing*** for band and tape, which combines traditional and non-traditional elements with electronically produced sounds to uncover a new world of band sonorities. Each of its three movements concerns itself with exploring a different sound sphere; the first movement "The Stars Come Out" (the only movement performed this evening) employs a quasi-aleatoric technique to build tension through increasing density.

Erb taught composition for over forty years at Southern Methodist University, Indiana University, Melbourne University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he was named Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Composition in 2000. "As a teacher," eminent conductor Leonard Slatkin reflected, "he was exemplary, with a solid foundation in the building blocks of composition." As a result, now the composition departments of American universities are well populated with Erb's former students. As David Spencer notes in his 2002 dissertation on Erb's trumpet works: "His enthusiasm in lending a helping hand is not lost on his students, who share a genuine affection for him and he for them. Erb has mentored hundreds of composers who live and work all over the globe, in western and non-western cultures. His universal appeal as a person and musician has had much to do with this, I am sure." Jen Morgo, a student of composition at CIM commented: "I met Don Erb when I was 15, and since then, almost everyone I meet seems boring. He's the most original, imaginative person I know, not to mention really cool!" His easy-going manner broke down barriers and encouraged affection, as Michael Leese, then a student composer, discovered when one of his own compositions was programmed with one of Erb's:

> I was completely intimidated by the pairing of these works (mine first, his second) and I agitatedly told him such before the concert started. He just laughed and said, "It'll be OK. Trust me, kid." The concert came and went, without a hitch, and there was a nice reception for my song cycle. Afterwards, Don came up to me, put his arm around my back to my shoulder (he was a big guy), squeezed, and said, "See, I told you it'd be OK!"

Donald Erb was also the teacher of David Kechley, chair of the Williams Music Department, who offered the following remembrance:

> I first met Donald Erb when he came to my parents' house in 1964. I was still in high school and the Seattle Symphony was performing his *Symphony of Overtures* on a new music festival at the University of Washington. As an aspiring young composer I was blown away by his music and the whole experience of that week.
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> The 60s was an exciting time for new music and Don was at the forefront. When he spoke about his passion for creating new sounds and new artistic visions it was in a straight-forward and down to earth manner. During a panel discussion with the other festival guest composers, Roger Reynolds, William Balcom, and Donald Keats, Don talked about his year as Composer-in-Residence in the Bakersfield, CA public schools and how the only resistance to trying new things like "singing in tone clusters" did not come not from the students, but from their teachers. He also gave an address for the College Music Society once about what an artist music do to survive in an academic environment.
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> Don was very encouraging to me when we first met and even more so when he returned to Seattle in 1968 for a repeat performance of his work, which this time was programmed with one of my own. As a result of that encounter I became his student at the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1976.
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> Donald Erb leaves a giant artistic and personal footprint. We all share the loss of his unique musical voice as well as the strong personal one with which he never hesitated to speak his mind. Many of us also have also lost a mentor and the most supportive teacher anyone could ever wish for.

David Lang: selections from *Shelter* (2005)

Winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his *The Little Match Girl Passion*, David Lang (b. 1957) straddles the uptown and downtown worlds of the New York new music scene, according to composer and critic Kyle Gann, more effectively than any other composer. Lang's music often synthesizes a minimalist aesthetic with a rock sensibility; however, his music tends to be less systematic and rhythmically complex than that of his totalist/postclassical contemporaries, as he tends to opt instead for theatrical gestures in his music. *Los Angeles Times* music critic Mark Swed capitulates to Lang's un-categorizable style, writing: "There is no name yet for this kind of music."

Along with composers Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe, Lang founded *Bang on a Can*, described by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "the country's most important vehicle for contemporary music." Once "only" a one-day new music festival, *Bang on a Can* is now a multi-faceted organization dedicated to commissioning, performing, creating, presenting and recording contemporary music and whose mission is "to expose exciting and innovative music as broadly and accessibly as possible to new audiences worldwide. And through its Summer Festival,"—held at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams every July—"Bang on a Can hopes to bring this energy and passion for innovation to a younger generation of composers and players."

Shelter is a seven-movement oratorio composed jointly by David Lang with his two Bang on Can collaborators (Lang composed three movements, while Gordon and Wolfe composed two movements each) and which features a libretto by Deborah Artman, haunting visual projections by Laurie Olinder, and an original film by Bill Morrison. A powerful, unflinching work, *Shelter* mines the myriad connotations of the work's title—physical structures, intimate personal exchanges, a metaphoric home for our beliefs—ultimately questioning whether what we build can protect us against the destructive power of the world around us. "Before I enter" is the oratorio's first movement, while "I want to live" is the sixth.

Before I enter my house
I touch the doorframe
before I enter my house
I bow

before I enter my house
I step up and then bow low
I pat my pockets for my keys
I leave my shoes at the door
I push aside the skin of the door
I adjust my eyes to the dark
I put the keys in a bowl
I kiss my fingers and pat the scroll
I have no key
I have no door
I step up

before I enter my house
I climb a ladder
I get down on my knees and crawl
I crouch down
I punch in a code on a keypad
I fix my face
I lift the flap of wool
I lift the flap of sheepskin
I step around a wall
I push aside the bamboo and palm
I wipe my feet
I take off my shoes
I check the fire

before I enter my house
I check under the mat for the only key
I sign my name
I show my eye
I show my fingerprint
I show my hand
I crawl through a tunnel
I take a deep breath
I breathe a sigh of relief
I climb down a hole
I light a candle
I brace myself
I turn on the lights

John Harbison: *Block I* from *Three City Blocks* (1993)

In a lecture entitled "Uses of Popular Music" given at Tanglewood during the summer of 1984, John Harbison said:

> Each generation believes deep down that the other generation's music is somehow wrong — maybe good but unnatural, unfaithful to experience. This perception finds double force with popular music. Pop music is above all the music of adolescence, sometimes prolonged adolescence. Every generation feels their pop music was the last good pop music, because they feel their early years were the last good early years. Adults nurse their generation's hits in their memories to their dying

> days because their most irreversible moments danced to that pulse. But then on their dying day it all dies, all except the standards and the few things that have achieved an artistic life, because for the most part they are associated with events and emotions, not durable free-standing musical objects. This is the poignancy of pop to each generation: its mortality and frailty. This is why pop music dates so comically and touchingly, so even the *best* of the last decade seems so quaint and unhip. This is why I believe *Teach Me Tonight* is a wonderful song (I hope it is): it is a blonde in 40s crinolines and extra makeup who refused to be taught. This is why the only popular music we can honestly and viably incorporate into our compositional style is that of our own adolescence. It is the perishable icon we seek to enshrine in something more durable, to find its essence, to strip it of its nostalgia and trap only its vitality.

A Boston-native, John Harbison is widely recognized as one of the leading American composers. A recipient of such awards as the Pulitzer Prize (for his cantata *The Flight into Egypt*), the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant," he has been called everything from a "radical conservative" to a "conservative radical." Although his complex yet accessible compositions are difficult to categorize stylistically (Harbison has written that "categories and labels usually are little more than hidden protestations of affection or aversion, inchoate appetites that crave support, even from worn-out adjectives"), they typically share a remarkable lyricism, a richness of rhythm and texture, and a strong theatrical element. His teacher at Harvard, though, did not find this endearing; one of Harbison's favorite recollections of his student years is Walter Piston, in his composition class, gruffly telling him that he had no future in *real* music, instead suggesting that he "stick with pop tunes." When asked about the incorporation of jazz in his works, Harbison responded:

> This is a complicated question because a composer cannot force his experiences into his music, but he better not try to keep it out.... Music will inevitably sound disjointed if there is disparity between a composer's background and the music he composes, between what the ear tells him and what he is trying to write down. Eventually a composer has to reconcile the music he writes with the music he really likes and pays attention to. For my generation the question was what role can jazz play in concert music.

Harbison's love of jazz started when he was young: he began improvising pieces at the piano at the age of five and he formed his own band when he was twelve, much to the chagrin of his piano teacher; she felt that his technique was a lost cause, as he was unable to play even eighth notes, instead playing them as swung, uneven jazz eighths. His predilection for improvisation, too, was not without repercussion. Bored by the simple "oom-pah-pah" accompaniments that were the life of a tuba player in the Princeton High School Band, he began improvising bass lines, so much so that he was eventually asked to leave the band. Describing the origins of his ***Three City Blocks*** (commissioned in 1991 by a consortium, led and organized by Frank Battisti, and premiered 2 August 1993 by the United States Air Force Band), Harbison offers the following prefatory remarks:

> Over the radio, in the early fifties, came sounds played by bands in hotels and ballrooms; now distant memories that seemed to a seventh-grade, small-town, late-night listener like the true pulse of giant imaged cities. Years later, these sounds—layered with real experiences of some of their places of origin; magnified, distorted, idealized and destabilized—came into contact with other sounds, some of recent origin, and resulted in these celebratory, menacing, *Three City Blocks*…composed among the palm trees and cypresses of the Italian Riviera. Why then was the composer pursued by these images of urban America? Was it premonition, apprehension, admonition, or a simple acknowledgment that the rural myth he had embraced has been swallowed whole by the city? …The language is urban, the architecture is blunt and sharp. For many years the romanticism of the rural ideal dominated American art, even as fewer people actually experienced the countryside or pursued the labors or

pleasures. But what still exists out there somewhere as a source of renewal and regeneration, or sheer escape, the rural vision has been replaced by reality. We are ruled politically by the suburbs, which are neither here nor there, but we are haunted and challenged, terrorized and energized, by the city. So the composer who wants to deal with live material opens his ears to the sounds of downtown. These sounds cannot simply be transcribed. They must be somehow essentialized—made to stand for more.

Ingram Marshall: *Fog Tropes* (1981)

> To reach the music of Ingram Marshall, turn left at minimalism, right at electronica, and keep going until just before you reach avant-garde. Marshall occupies a one-man lot on the contemporary music landscape. Or maybe it's more accurate to say that he creates his own musical landscapes—misty, mysterious places that afford moments of strange lucidity.
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> —Justin Davidson

Ingram Marshall is the composer of what Adam Schatz described in the *New York Times* as "some of the most stirring spiritual art to be found in America today, …music [that] offers a powerful recreation of solitude that is very close to an experience of the divine." He has composed electronic works and music for acoustic instruments/ensembles, as well as pieces that combine the two. The influence of Indonesian gamelan music may be heard in the slowed-down sense of time and use of melodic repetition found in many of his pieces. He has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, Fromm Foundation, the California Arts Council, the Guggenheim Foundation and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Marshall currently lives in New Haven, CT.

Fog Tropes—Marshall's most popular and frequently performed work—was composed in San Francisco in 1981 at the behest of John Adams who was then organizing a concert series for the San Francisco Symphony called "New and Unusual Music." After the premiere, Alan Ulrich of the San Francisco Examiner marveled at "the swiftness with which [Marshall] makes you stop asking *How*? and keeps you listening to the *What? Fog Tropes* suggests sonic vistas of incomparable beauty." Since then, *Fog Tropes* has been performed all over the world, in spaces ranging from concert halls to churches, state capitol domes and even a slow moving river barge. Marshall offers the following about the work:

> I had put together a tape piece called simply "Fog" which used ambient sounds from around the San Francisco Bay—mostly fog horns. That ten-minute piece became the underlying "bed" for the live instrumental parts (six brass instruments). The tape part not only uses maritime sounds for its constructive materials, but vocal keenings and the unique sound of the Balinese *gambuh*, a long bamboo flute. Although the brass parts and tape sounds are distinct from one another there is an attempt to blend them so as to create a harmonious whole. In the opening minute only the tape sounds are heard and then the horns begin their intertwining eighth notes of ascending twirls, which become more intense as the piece progresses. Trombones arrive underneath and the first cry-like utterances of the trumpets appear on top. The basic sound world of the piece is established. Midway through the piece a series of chordal ladders create a climatic feeling as the lowest fog horns become more assertive. This harmonic progression reappears at the end but in a more wistful, restrained manner. Many people are reminded of the San Francisco Bay when they hear this music, but for me it is a piece about memory and the feeling of being lost.

Jonathan Newman: *My Hands Are a City* (2008)

My hands are a city, a lyre
And my hands are afire
And my mother plays Corelli
while my hands burn.
-Gregory Corso

Described as "an outstanding composer...with a quirky and intellectually provocative bent," Jonathan Newman (b. 1972) often incorporates styles of pop, blues, jazz, folk, and funk into otherwise classical models. His music is typically rich with rhythmic drive and colorful orchestrations; in fact, Ira Novoselsky of Bandworld described Newman's *Chunk* as "a well-scored delight." Newman holds degrees from Boston University's School for the Arts (BM), where he studied composition with Richard Cornell and Charles Fussell and conducting with Lukas Foss, and The Juilliard School (MM), where he studied with composers John Corigliano and David Del Tredici and conducting with Miguel Harth-Bedoya. At Juilliard, his collaborative works for dance enjoyed multiple performances at The Juilliard Theater, Alice Tully Hall, P.S. 122, and Dance Theater Workshop. Early training includes Boston University Tanglewood Institute and the Aspen Music Festival where he studied with composers George Tsontakis and Bernard Rands.

In 2001, Newman was awarded the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 2003 he won the bi-annual NEA/Merrill Jones Composition Award. Newman is a founding member of the composer-consortium BCM International: four stylistically-diverse composers (with Jim Bonney, Steven Bryant, and Eric Whitacre) "dedicated to enriching the repertoire with exciting works for mediums often mired in static formulas." BCM's music has generated a following of champions around the world, several thousand fans in an active online community, and two recordings: "BCM Saves the World" (2002, Mark Custom Records) and "BCM Men of Industry" (2004, BCM Records). His music has also been recorded by the University of Nevada Las Vegas Wind Orchestra, the Rutgers Wind Ensemble, Tokyo's TAD Wind Symphony), and a recording of *My Hands Are a City* will be released on Naxos by the University of Georgia Wind Ensemble in the near future. Upcoming projects include a new work for percussion ensemble for premiere in 2009, while recent commissions include Concertino (2008) for flute solo, chamber winds, and piano; *Climbing Parnassus*, commissioned for the 2008 Japan Wind Ensemble Conductors Conference; and arrangements of electronica for the *Acoustica:* Alarm Will Sound *performs Aphex Twin*, recorded on Cantaloupe and performed at the 2005 Lincoln Center Festival. In 2007 he began work on an opera based on the 1962 cult horror film *Carnival of Souls*, in collaboration with playwright Gary Winter.

My Hands Are a City was commissioned by a consortium of 17 wind ensembles, including the Williams College Symphonic Winds. Mr. Newman has written the following about the work:

> In 2005 I wrote *The Rivers of Bowery*, a short work celebrating a verse from Allen Ginsberg's Howl. Response to the piece was positive, but I believed that both the musical and extra-musical themes were perhaps larger than the length allowed. I designed *My Hands Are a City* as an expansion, both in thematic scope, and in musical material. In my neighborhood on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the musicians and poets and characters of our mid-Century "Beats" are still very active ghosts. I walk past the tenement where Allen Ginsberg wrote Howl, stroll across "Charlie Parker Place", and over the city streets rapturously described in prose and verse, and captured in era photos and film. Surrounded by these spirits, I allowed *My Hands Are a City* (titled after a 1955 Gregory Corso poem), to overflow with mid-Century American vernacular. Altered progressions from bebop tunes, stretched out, frozen, and suspended solos from Lester Young and Charlie Parker recordings, as well as sensory input from months of immersing myself in novels, poetry, and photographs, all fill out the

> work. Taking musical material from *The Rivers of Bowery* happened quite naturally, as well. The process was much like approaching my finished piece as if it was my sketchbook, and using that once-final material as the cells and harmonies to then spin out. But where in its sister-work I concentrated on capturing Ginsberg's singing of the lost and outcast mobs of his counter-culture, what struck me while making this more expansive work was the ever-present cloud of sadness hanging over much of the work of The Beats in general. It's a quiet sadness I hear even in the frantic bebop of Bird and Miles, and in my re-reading of the classic literature of the period. This too, seeped in, perhaps adding a tinge of darkness to the colors of the piece.

My Hands Are a City will soon become the third movement of Newman's Symphony No. 1, a wind ensemble consortium commission based on themes of mid-century American Beat Culture.

An interesting coincidence should be noted: Newman published an article in December 2004 in the National Band Association Journal entitled "El Dorado: A composer discovers the world of winds." While not related to Adams's *El Dorado* (that concludes this evening's program), the essay reveals another way that this evening's "sounds of place" theme can be extended and developed:

> Today's composer, like Cortez and the Spaniards of hundreds of years ago, are in search of a fabled land — our own City of Gold, that music community where composers are respected and admired, sought after, and considered worth hiring. In our El Dorado the riches take the form of opportunity…. We composers, this intrepid ensemble of explorers, if I may extend the metaphor, have over the centuries found several routes to our mythical destination: court patronage (Haydn), performing (Liszt, or Mahler and Bernstein as conductors), and now, overwhelmingly, a career in academia (almost anyone now belongs in this last category, but for a typical example let's use the great Vincent Persichetti). Some have been forced onto sidetracks like insurance (Ives) and cab-driving (famously, Philip Glass and Steve Reich). No matter what path, we all desire the riches of performance opportunity. … This composer/explorer looks forward to continuing the quest for opportunity, from wherever in the music community I might find it. Maybe it's me, but that glittering city twinkling in the distance looks a lot like a wind ensemble....

Eve Beglarian: *Landscaping for Privacy* (1995)

> Most music, even the most cutting edge and willfully experimental, arrives before us with fairly preconceived parameters and conditions under which we should best appreciate it. We come to it knowing the proper set of aesthetic values and attitudes required in the mental dress code. The best means by which to find yourself into Eve Beglarian's music is to arrive naked to the party, more or less free of expectation. Expect only a musical head trip according to Beglarian's creative world view
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> —Josef Woodard

Described by Josef Woodard of *The Los Angeles Times* as "a humane, idealistic rebel and a musical sensualist," by Kyle Gann of *The Village Voice* as "one of new music's truly free spirits," and by Albert Innaurato of *The New York Times* as a "remarkable experimentalist," Eve Beglarian is a composer, performer, and audio producer whose music is "an eclectic and wide-open series of enticements" (Woodard) and "wacky, raunchy, in-your-face, and brainy" (Gann). Her chamber, choral, and orchestral music has been commissioned and widely performed by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the California EAR Unit, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, Relâche, the Paul Dresher Ensemble, Sequitur, the American Composers Orchestra, Maya Beiser, Lauren Flanigan, and Marya Martin, among many other groups and individuals. Last fall, members of the Symphonic Winds trombone section (with Steven Bodner, conductor and bari sax) presented a preview performance of her score to choreographer David Neumann's *feedforward* at MASS MoCA in North Adams.

Daughter of composer and former USC dean Grant Beglarian (1927-2002), she started out as an Uptowner, with a Princeton-Columbia education. Once left to her personally expressive devices beyond schooling, however, she repudiated her serialist ways while her Downtown inclinations became apparent. Gann calls her approach to musical sources "omnivorous," as her aesthetic is inspired as much by pop music and jazz as by more traditional classical musics. As Woodard continues: "Beglarian continues to carve out a path in music not quite like any other in contemporary music, not so much breaking rules as ignoring the ones she has no use for, and nurturing ideas or combinations she finds useful and appealing…. Beyond the basics, she seems more interested in writing—and appropriating—music and contextualizing it with other elements, as part of a grand, genetic cultural experiment."

Highlights of her work in music theater includes music for Mabou Mines' Obie-winning *Dollhouse*, *Animal Magnetism*, *Ecco Porco*, and *Choephorai* directed by Lee Breuer; Forgiveness, a collaboration with Chen Shi-Zheng and Noh master Akira Matsui; and the China National Beijing Opera Theater's production of The Bacchae, also directed by Chen Shi-Zheng. She has collaborated with choreographers including Victoria Marks, Ann Carlson, and Susan Marshall, and with visual and video artists including Shirin Neshat, Kevork Mourad, Cory Arcangel, Barbara Hammer, and Anne Bray. Performance projects include *Songs from a Book of Days*, *The Story of B*, *Open Secrets*, Hildegurls' *Ordo Virtutum*, *twisted tutu*, and *typOpera*.

Landscaping for Privacy was written in August-September 1995 for twisted tutu (Kathleen Supové, keyboards and Eve Beglarian, vocals) while Beglarian was in residence at the Bellagio Center in Italy under the auspices of grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Originally, the keyboard part was written to be played using the arpeggiator function of a synthesizer keyboard—what Beglarian describes as "sort of like a new convertible with an automatic transmission;" since then, Berglarian has created two additional versions that rely more on human expertise rather than the sequencing capabilities of an electronic synthesizer—one for narrator, acoustic piano, and CD; and the one performed tonight, for chamber ensemble. Set to a poem by Linda Norton, *Landscaping for Privacy* was intended, in the words of Beglarian, "to capture the fragile elation urban types feel driving out of the city on a beautiful Saturday morning in spring." As Woodward writes:

> In Norton's deceptively breezy poem, polarities of urban life in lower Manhattan versus the suburban yawn and sprawl of Long Island and imagined realities become the focus of a conversational flow of words and reflections on mortality. Through the narrative prism of one side of a conversation, the implied character goes on an escapist drive with her lover, into an uncertain neighborhood and future. They head off under a canopy of impressionistic clouds, a "bouffant armada, fluffy but cruel, ushering last days for many," before a long stretch of percolating, pointillist massage of sixteenth-notes on piano suggests another quasi-coda, an unusual touch of structural framing.

Gustav Holst: *Hammersmith: Prelude and Scherzo for Military Band*, op. 52 (1930)

In short, [*Hammersmith*] must sound like London and not Paris." – Holst

The two Suites for Military Band—First Suite in Eb (1909) and Second Suite in F (1911)—of Gustav Holst (1874-1934) are widely accepted as cornerstones of the repertoire for modern wind band. In fact, if to this pairing are added the early works of Ralph Vaughan Williams (*Toccata Marziale* and *English Folk Song Suite*, 1924) and Gordon Jacob (*The William Byrd Suite*, 1924), the beginning of the modern wind band can be seen to have begun in the United Kingdom in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Unlike the large military bands in France, Germany, and the United States, the military bands in England at the turn-of-the-century were, by comparison, rather small; against the band of

approximately 200 needed to perform the Berlioz *Symphonie funèbre*, and the almost-100 needed to play Wagner's *Trauermusik*, the official 28-piece British army band seems more like an expanded nineteenth-century *harmonie* (the popular court wind ensembles of the late 18th- and early 19th centuries, consisting of three or four pairs of woodwinds and horns, that often provided dinner music and concerts of operatic transcriptions for the nobility). As such, when Holst composed for the military band, he conceived of the ensemble not as an enormous, massed collection of doubled instruments, but along orchestral lines, thinking of individual colors and textures. Compared with the contemporary band repertoire of the turn-of-the-century, which was dominated by orchestral and operatic transcriptions and marches, Holst's Suites—with their delicate textures, carefully considered balances, and original compositional craft—seemed like a breath of fresh air to those accustomed to the "traditional" band performances. (A review of in *The Daily Telegraph* of 1922 supports this: "The example of Mr. Holst ought to bring about a change in this respect securing band works from composers, for his Suite in F—performed for the first time last night—is a most effective piece of serious music and at the same time a proof that a composer gifted with inspiration and understanding can obtain from a military band effects of sounds entirely novel and beautiful.")

In the late 1920s, Holst was commissioned to by the conductor Walton O'Donnell to write a work for his ensemble, the BBC Wireless Military Band. After much delay, Holst finished his ***Hammersmith: Prelude and Scherzo*** for military band in December 1830 (creating an arrangement for orchestra the following year). While the work was rehearsed twice in the BBC studios, the intended premiere performance never materialized and *Hammersmith* was not performed in Britain in its original version until several decades after Holst's death. (Holst arranged for the premiere, then, to be presented by the United States Marine Band in Washington, D.C., as a part of the American Bandmasters Association convention in the spring of 1932; what he must have thought of hearing this intimate work played by an ensemble of nearly100 musicians can only be surmised.)

Although Holst's daughter Imogen, the foremost authority on her father's music, ranks *Hammersmith* as one of Holst's greatest achievements (along with *Egdon Heath,* op. 47; the *Double Concerto*, op. 49; and the *Choral Fantasia*, op. 51), the work lay in obscurity after its premiere, unperformed, until 1954 when Robert Cantrick of the Carnegie Institute of Technology recovered what had become the lost performance materials to the band version. In fact, while *Hammersmith* is generally regarded as one of Holst's few true masterpieces, in the "band world" primacy is still given to his First Suite in Eb with performances of *Hammersmith* being far fewer.

From the age of 31 until his death at the age of 60, Holst diligently worked as Music Director of the St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith, a western metropolitan borough of London, and a place where he developed very strong spiritual roots. The aspect of the district that made the deepest impression on him was the stark element of dramatic contrast everywhere he looked—with 125,000 inhabitants packed into an area of 3.5 square miles, the members of the middle-class lived almost adjacent to the poor, intellectual activity flourishing amidst material impoverishment. Almost daily, he would take a solitary walk along the River Thames; he was haunted by the juxtaposition of the quiet, aloof river, while around the corner, in the words of Imogen Holst: "there was all the noise and hustle and exuberant vulgarity of the crowd, pushing and shoving and sweating and swearing and shrieking and guffawing its good-humoured way." In this scenario, Holst observed a profound philosophical problem—the paradoxical interplay of the humane and the mystical attitudes in man's experience—and so he turned to medium of the band to express this duality musically.

When the conductor Adrian Boult asked Holst about the influences that led to the work, Holst replied: "As far as the work owes anything to outside influences, it is the result of living in Hammersmith for thirty-five years on and off and wanting to express my feelings for the place in music." Holst later elaborated on this sentiment when he wrote:

> There is no programme and no attempt to depict any person or incident. The only two things I think were in my mind were 1) a district crowded with cockneys which would be overcrowded if it were not for the everlasting good humour of the people concerned, and 2) the background of the river, that was there before the crowd and will be there presumably long afterwards, and which goes on its way largely unnoticed and apparently quite unconcerned.

As he was composing *Hammersmith*, Holst finished reading the novel *Water Gypsies* by Sir Alan Herbert, a contemporary author. The novel tells the story of a working-class girl from Hammersmith who is in love with both an illiterate river bargee and a painter of aristocratic birth. While the color and flavor of Hammersmith is vividly captured in the course of the narrative, the author's central problem is to show the heroine's impossible attraction toward two worlds so disparate that she can find no way to reconcile them. In dedicating *Hammersmith* "To the author of *The Water Gypsies*," Holst is surely paying homage to a fellow-artist who drew from the same dramatic contrasts that affected him so deeply.

The fundamental issue in *Hammersmith* is the mosaic-like juxtaposition of contrasting moods and music. While the contrasts can be seen sharply on the large-structural level of the piece (between the slow "river" sections of the Prelude and the quicker "crowd" sections of the Scherzo), they are also apparent at microlevels. For example, in the Scherzo, Holst writes polymetrically, layering 6/8 variously over both 2/4 and 3/4 meters, while in the Prelude, Holst uses shifting bitonal lines (an E-major melody in the horns over the low brass f-minor river theme) to evoke the constant, unconcerned flow of the river. The contrast between the river-music and the crowd-music is quite clear, even when the two styles overlap. As Imogen writes: "Owing to the skill of his counterpoint, he was able to achieve the 'unity of opposites' that he had already begun thinking about when he was but a student."

In fact, the juxtaposition of opposites seems to be a major feature of much of Holst's work. As Cantrick writes: "Holst's first great success, *The Planets*, exhibited his interest in exploiting this paradox as the basis for his large works. But that was a suite, and there was no attempt to unite the two attitudes in one comprehensive outlook." While Holst may have lacked either the compositional technique or the philosophical interest at that point to adequately accommodate disparate musical ideas concurrently, by the time of *Hammersmith*, where unresolved tension is the essence, he finally found adequate musical means for expressing the paradox in a one-movement work. As Cantrick continues: "the mood of the Prelude [is] other-worldly, non-human, unemotional, spiritually serene, cool, withdrawn, self-contained and inward-looking; the mood of the Scherzo [is] raffish, vulgar, worldly, excited, warm, emotional, and extroverted—the artistic union of the two achieved without elevating either to superior status over the other."

Hammersmith, then, is entirely indicative of the mature Holst: it is poly-metric, poly-tonal, poly-motivic, poly-rhythmic—in a sense, it is poly-everything. But what Holst demonstrates here—perhaps more directly and clearly than in any of his other scores that are not scored for winds alone—is what can be found within such seemingly disparate materials: the relationship between contrast and unity, between reality and illusion.

John Luther Adams: *The Farthest Place* (2001)

> An ecosystem is a network of patterns, a complex multiplicity of elements that function together as a whole. I conceive of music in a similar way. For me the essence of music is not the specific patterns of harmony, melody, rhythm and timbre. It's the totality of the sound, the larger wholeness of the music. The central truth of ecology is that everything in this world is connected to everything else. The great challenge now facing the human species is to live by this truth. We must reintegrate our fragmented consciousness and learn to live in harmony with the larger patterns of life on earth, or we risk our own extinction.
>
> As a composer it is my belief that music can contribute to the awakening of our ecological understanding. By deepening our awareness of our connections to the earth, music can provide a sounding model for the renewal of human consciousness and culture. Over the years this belief has led from me from music inspired by the songs of birds, to landscape painting with tones, to elemental noise and beyond, in search of an ecology of music. The songs of birds first awakened in me a profound longing to feel at home in nature. From that longing grew the vision of a music grounded in deep attention to the natural world, a vision that has been at the heart of my work ever since…. In time I found myself listening more and more closely to the music of the field itself.
>
> —JLA, from "In Search of An Ecology of Music"

In a 16' x 24' cabin-studio outside Fairbanks, where John Luther Adams, called "one of the most original musical thinkers of the new century" by Alex Ross, has worked for over two decades, the vastness of Alaska sweeping through the distant reaches of his imagination and every corner of his compositions. In many ways, Adams's music seems the resonant analogue to the landscape where he works—he is willing to use any means necessary to communicate the power of the elemental forces he experiences daily. Composer Kyle Gann describes Adams's music as "beautiful, shimmering, vast, luminous, ecstatic," while critic Jochem Valkenburg calls it "relentless and awe-inspiring... a model of movement, space and sublimity."

A recipient of grants from the NEA and Rockefeller Foundation, Adams has created sound and light installations; written works for such diverse collections of musicians as orchestras, percussion ensembles, and Alaska Native voices, orchestral residencies; and collected his elegant prose in his book *Winter Music*. His music has been performed by Bang on a Can, the California E.A.R. Unit, and Percussion Group Cincinnati, among others. The Williams Percussion Ensemble will perform his *Earth and the Great Weather* next week, on Saturday, November 22. While many of his works are written for large ensembles, allowing Adams to create textural clouds that seem to float and transform slowly and willfully, he has recently begun composing more works for small ensembles. As Gann writes:

> Adams needs both the time and the large orchestral forces because he works on many rhythmic levels at once, building up layers of distinct activity whose simultaneity creates a gentle information overload, and a mystical continuity… Now clouds of sound are easy to create with an orchestra. The strings sustain chords, the woodwinds arpeggio at different rates, and Adams likes the shimmering of the "Harris gamelan" favored by Roy Harris—celesta, marimba, and vibraphone—though he uses it very differently. Strip down to only a few instruments, though, and new strategies are required. And it is to Adams's impressive achievement that he has learned how to create the same luminous, mystical feeling in his chamber works, even when every individual line is audible…. What Adams achieved in the orchestra pieces with clouds, he has to achieve here by the more careful shaping of melody, and a seamless polyphony. And it works. These pieces are as inscrutable as a fifteenth-century mass by Ockeghem, but more colorful, and just as noble-sounding.

Through much of 80s and 90s, Adams's music became less pictorial as he aspired to evoke the experience—the feeling—of being in a place, without direct reference to a particular landscape.

However, while his music became more abstract, it was still haunted by his landscape. As Adams indicates: "The light in northern latitudes embodies colors and textures that I've experienced in no other place. After living in Alaska for many years I came to wonder whether I could somehow convey in music these special qualities of light. I pursued a music composed entirely of floating fields of color." The chamber work ***The Farthest Place*** (2001) is one of the most successful of these recent abstract-but-luminous chamber works. Scored for only a quintet of violin, bass, piano, vibraphone, and marimba, Adams creates a lush, undulating, fleetingly-transient texture by asking for tremolos in the keyboard instruments while the strings create an aural frame with their suspended, arching lines on the registral boundaries. Adams here is not seeking to convey a specific place or an actual landscape; rather, with this most modest of instrumental forces, Adams distills the feeling of color into an affective, sublime meditation on the very concept of place.

In describing [his work *The Place Where We Go To Listen*] as "an imaginary world that is connected directly to the real world, the larger world," Adams could very easily be describing all of his work. As Jesse Jarnow writes: "inside, one will discover that—just as much as Alaska—John Luther Adams' music is a real place, his evocations as unique as the Arctic sun." In fact, Gann goes further: "[Adams's] music perfectly echoes the landscape he loves: impersonal, relentless, larger than human scale, yet gorgeous, a quiet chaos of colors, suffused with light. It's not a climate everyone could live in. But for those who want to bathe their ears in an aural aurora borealis while staying warm inside, it's a spiritual odyssey well worth taking."

> My music has always been profoundly influenced by the natural world and a strong sense of place. In my recent work, I have begun to explore a territory I call "sonic geography" – a region that exists somewhere between place and culture, between human imagination and the world around us. I hope to move beyond landscape painting in sound toward a music which, in its own way, *is* landscape – a music which creates its own inherently sonic presence and sense of place.
>
> — JLA

Olivier Messiaen: *La Ville d'en-Haut* (1987)

Recherchez les choses d'en-haut, là où se trouve le Christ. (Colossiens 3,1)
Et je vis la Cité Sainte qui descendait du ciel, d'après de Dieu. (Apocalypse (21,2)

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. (Colossians 3,1)
And I saw the holy city, coming down out of heaven, from God. (Revelation 21,2)

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) is often regarded as the most important French composer of the twentieth century after Debussy and is one of the most influential composers of the century in any country. His music redefined the avant-garde, synthesizing many compositional trends prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century and inspiring composers—such as his distinguished pupils Boulez, Stockhausen and Xenakis—to experiment in a host of new directions. Messiaen quickly developed an original and unique style which included innovations in harmony and melody (including the use of his ingenious modes with limited transposition capabilities); rhythm (including utilizing rhythms from ancient Greek and Hindu sources, and developments such as palindromic rhythms and rhythms with added values); color (Messiaen had mild synaesthesia that caused him to see colors when he heard music); and orchestration (including the use of the ondes martenot and many unusual percussion instrument). Messiaen's music is known for its devoted adherence to Catholic theological subjects and for its transcriptions of birdsong. He believed that all his music was written to glorify God and developed a sophisticated sign system with which to evangelize. Of special importance are his works for organ and piano. Messiaen was organist at La Trinité Church in Paris for over 60 years, writing many works for organ (most of which he recorded himself), including *L'Ascension* (1934) and the *Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (1969). In 1961, he

married his second wife, Yvonne Loriod, a piano virtuoso who premiered virtually every work that Messiaen wrote that featured piano and an authority on Messiaen's music.

Messiaen called himself an "ornithologist and rhythmician." He collected and transcribed countless birdsongs, incorporating this material into many of works from the mid-1940s on, culminating in his *Oiseaux exotiques* (1956) for solo piano, percussion, and wind ensemble and *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (1958) for solo piano. Melodically, Messiaen strove to capture the timeless quality of birdsong, exulting in the continuous present. Time was more a frame than a flow; balance, stasis, and repetition, then, count for more than progress and development. As Messiaen asserted in his *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie*: "For the musician and the rhythmician, the perception of time is the source of all music and all rhythm." This enormous, seven-volume tome was edited by Loriod and published shortly after Messiaen's death and includes three volumes dedicated exclusively to time, rhythm, and rhythmic analysis, while the later volumes included several analyses of Messiaen's own work and a discussion of his modes and color. In Messiaen's view—or certainly in his mind's eye—harmony was color, and music was colored time.

In ***La Ville d'en-Haut*** (1987, but premiered two years later), one of the last works that he wrote, Messiaen turned to the wind ensemble medium to evoke sound and colors of Paradise, of "The City Above." As an orchestrator, Messiaen may have inherited some of the opulence of his teacher Paul Dukas, but he was undoubtedly influenced more by Stravinsky, who had dethroned the strings from their 19th-century pre-eminence, proposing by example the notion that every work should determine its own chamber or orchestral forces. (In 1924, discussing his octet for winds, Stravinsky wrote: "My *Octour* is a musical object. This object has a form and that form is influenced by the musical matter with which it is composed. The differences of matter determine the differences of form. One does not do the same with marble that one does with stone. My *Octour* is made for an ensemble of wind instruments [which] seem to me to be more apt to render a certain rigidity of the form I had in mind than other instruments – the string instruments, for example, which are less cold and more vague. The suppleness of the string instruments can lend itself to more subtle nuances and can serve better the individual sensibility of the executant in works built on an 'emotive' basis.") Messiaen, then, often turned to ensembles without strings; besides *La Ville*, other wind ensemble works include *Oiseaux exotiques* (which will be performed by a combined Chamber Winds/Chamber Players ensemble on December 3), *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, and the monumental *Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. Ned Rorem once described Messiaen's orchestration as: "glamorous like a giant gold nun whose frantic tranquil voice mounts toward heaven."

La Ville is enormous and elemental, but built from only a few elements: a great summons for the full wind with cymbals and tam-tams, and with complementary, resonant aftershocks provided by the keyed instruments; a radiant, organ-like chorale; the song of the melodius warbler, given by 3 mallet percussion instruments with cymbal; and a conversation between two other birds—the blackcap (woodwinds and triangle) and garden warbler (piano cadenzas). The form of the work, then, is not so much a narrative or interplay between the elements, but a mosaic – each element develops according to its own logic, suspending time, evolving of its own design as the piece progresses, with a total architecture emerging only when viewed or heard from a distance. According to Messiaen: "the brass chorale represents the glory of the Heavenly City. The birds of the xylophones, the woodwinds, and piano solo, symbolize the joy of the resurrected, assured of being near to Christ. The chords' colours change almost constantly, and symbolize in their turn the colours of the light Above." In the shifting, dense chords, one can almost envision the overwhelming brightness and intense spectrum of the colors pouring through the many stain-

glassed panels; with a resounding sonority and a precise arranging of time, Messiaen reveals his view of the all-encompassing grandeur and all-consuming majesty of heaven.

John Adams: "Soledades" from *El Dorado* (1991)

> One thing that is often revealed in a big Adams piece is a kinship with Nature, not so much in the obvious way of painting an impression of it, but in deeper, more inherent ways…. Landscape can be a very powerful handmaiden in creative human endeavor, and knowing that, John has always been responsive to his surroundings…. *El Dorado* and several other "landscape" pieces [are] painted the canvas of Nature as much as that of literary or philosophical speculation. No one listening to it will ever see mountain meadows or tall majestic redwoods—no, it's not pictorial—but the more I delve into it, the more I hear the connections to the natural world, and that is one of the keys of the piece, I think. In fact, going back to the metaphor of the music as journey, I can see that much of John's life journey has, indeed, been traversed through the landscape of Nature.
>
> —Ingram Marshall

John Coolidge Adams is one of America's most admired and respected composers. Born and raised in Concord, New Hampshire, Adams grew up in a family that saw no boundaries or distinctions between different styles of music; both his parents were active performers musical (his father played clarinet and his mother sang in church choir and local musical theater productions), and they instilled in young John a love of music ranging from Mozart to Benny Goodman, Bach to Broadway show tunes—and it is this wide range of influences that continues to fire Adams's musical imagination. As Thomas May remarks: "If Adams has become America's most prominent and in some ways most respected composer, it's because he's found his own voice and his own way beyond the unproductive aesthetic skirmishes of recent decades. He's so past the polarizing arguments of whether music should be tonal or not, or should be easily understood or esoteric, or be 'pop'-sounding or freakishly original." A musician of enormous range and technical command, he has produced works, both operatic and symphonic, that stand out among all contemporary classical music for the depth of their expression, the brilliance of their sound and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. Known particularly for his operatic works on contemporary subjects (particularly his collaborations with director Peter Sellars, poet-librettist Alice Goodman, and choreographer Mark Morris: *Nixon in China*—which received both an Emmy and a Grammy award, and the recording of which was named by Time magazine as "one of the ten most important recordings of the decade"—and the immensely controversial *The Death of Klinghoffer*), he is one of the most frequently performed living composers. Among numerous awards and honors, he won the Grawemeyer Award (1995) and was named "Composer of the Year" by *Musical America* (1997). Revealing his status as, perhaps, the unofficial *composer laureate* for the U.S., in 2002 Adams was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to write a work commemorating the first anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks. His *On the Transmigration of Souls* received the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Music, and the Nonesuch recording won a rare "triple crown" at the Grammys, including "Best Classical Recording", "Best Orchestral Performance", and "Best Classical Contemporary Composition."

After studies at Harvard (1965-71, M.A. 1972) with Leon Kirchner, Earl Kim, Roger Sessions, Harold Shapero and David Del Tredici, Adams moved to California, teaching at the San Francisco Conservatory for ten years (1972-82). When he left the East Coast, Adams made a conscious decision to break away from both the European postwar aesthetic and the American academic avant-garde of the time; he believed he had to choose between what he calls the Boulez paradigm and the John Cage paradigm. As he commented: "I opted to follow Cage because I thought that he at least was genuinely American and utterly original. Furthermore, many of Cage's philosophical interests like Zen and Buckminster Fuller appealed to me…. What particularly offended me about

the European serialists and post-war composers like Boulez, Stockhausen, and Berio was their absolute deafness to popular music: to rock and to jazz. I just couldn't believe that somebody could be a composer in the United States and not want to absorb all of the Dionysian energy and color in the world of pop music and do something with it. I was keenly aware of how the vernacular tradition had been the wellspring for many of the great European composers, from Bach through Brahms and Bartók and Ravel." He quickly became involved in the Bay Area's thriving new music scene and began to forge associations with local composers and musicians, such as Ingram Marshall. As the conductor of the Conservatory's New Music Ensemble, Adams commissioned and introduced new works by important experimental composers. In 1978 he became new music advisor to the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. With music director Edo de Waart, he created the orchestra's highly successful and controversial "New and Unusual Music series," introducing major American and European avant-garde composers to San Francisco audiences. His collaboration with the orchestra served as the model for the Meet the Composer residency program, through which he was appointed the Symphony's composer-in-residence (1982–5). Several of Adams's landmark orchestral works—that established his reputation on a national scale—were written for and premiered by the San Francisco Symphony, including *Harmonium* (1981), *Grand Pianola Music* (1982), *Harmonielehre* (1985) and *El Dorado* (1991).

In an interview with Thomas May, Adams observed:

> The analogy between the two—musical "space" and geographical space—comes to me from the experience of traveling over a large land mass. To be moving across a surface… let's say: you could be going over part of the central part of the continent in an airplane at thirty thousand feet and looking down and seeing hundreds of miles of the Earth's surface, but what you see moves very, very slowly. Or you could be in a speeding car going eighty miles per hour while the road in front of you changes almost every second, with new objects—houses, trees, signs, people along the side—whizzing past your field of vision at breakneck speed. The formal idea with my music is that something appears on the event horizon, and then it increases in importance as it begins to dominate the screen, and then it passes you and it's gone. Meanwhile, several other events have arisen at various stages of moving towards you. I think that is the essence of how I compose and it's the way I experience my own music. It's very different from rhetorical form, which is organized as a dialectical discussion of opposing motives or gestures.

The geographical space that Adams traverses in ***El Dorado*** is both symbolic and metaphorical. Historically, El Dorado was synonymous with a fabulous, but unknown, region of unimaginable riches; authors such as Milton and Voltaire both set stories there. As Adams writes, though: "I meant the title *El Dorado* to be only partly ironic. The Spanish term itself, once mysteriously evocative, has become part of the banality of real-estate brochures and luxury automakers. But when first used in the New World by the Spanish explorers and missionaries it summoned an image of a virginal, untouched Eden, an uncorrupted paradise of natural abundance. In our own time "el dorado" also has paradoxically come to hint at its opposite: corruption, defilement, abuse, and the befouling of one's own nest." Adams admits that, as a musical image, *El Dorado* came to him faster and more fully than any previous piece, appearing to him more like an apparition, alarmingly complete in its detail; in fact the fourteen-minute "Soledades" movement was composed in less than seven days. The work was inspired by a pair of paintings hanging side by side on a wall, a giant diptych comprising two wildly different scenes, both having to do with the New World. As Adams continues:

> The composing was done in 1991 at a time when many artists were committed to works commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the Spanish "discovery" of the New World. Most of these pieces used the colonial oppression of the native population as their themes. My image, which may or may not have been suggested by this difficult anniversary, was less a political statement than it was a personal and very emotional response to the impact of man on the landscape itself….

> The friction is between man and the natural world. I wanted to express my own thoughts about the relationship of the human species to its natural environment but without yielding to the kind of self-loathing that nowadays informs so many artworks addressing the subject…. *El Dorado* is about creation and corruption, only in an interesting twist: the corruption comes first and is followed by an Arcadian scene of re-creation and renewal.

Adams's *El Dorado* also has two panels: the first "punishing," while the second is "pure"—the first with man, the second without him. The first movement (not performed tonight) is an energetic, archetypical "machine in the garden" – mindless, automatic, inexorably consuming, frustrating – a landscape subject to human abuse. Adams describes this movement as "a single, ascending ramp, the music moves with the implacability of a powerful excavator, bulldozing its way toward a point of barely controlled orchestral chaos" or as "Ravel's *Bolero*, only without the seduction." The second movement ("Soledades," Solitudes) is the polar opposite: a landscape entirely without the human footprint. As Adams writes:

> "Soledades" ("Solitudes") is a second landscape, but this is a landscape without man, without his potential for destruction. Instead of a long ramp that is violently chopped off at the end, the governing form here is a grand arch, with a serene if somewhat melancholy beginning, a huge tidal crest in the middle [what Adams elsewhere calls "an equally serene scherzo"] and a gradual dissolve into silence at the end. In between these borders, the music moves from a slow, wavelike undulation to an ecstatic dance of ascending scales, rushing forward in a torrent of sixteenth notes over the long, imperturbable bass lines that migrate under the surface of the music like herds of slow-moving leviathans…. Like its companion, "Soledades" is also about growth. Here, however, the growth is presented as natural, organic. Where the growth described in Part I is out of control and virulent, the process of musical evolution in "Soledades" is even and authentic, unforced, with each cell of musical material giving birth to offspring that reflect it without distortion. Granted, it is an Arcadian dream, an essay in the imagining of a virgin terrain that may be no more attainable in our present musical times than is the discovery of one last uncorrupted landscape on the surface of the globe. But the metaphor is there, and it is worth exploring.

Adams's work—written almost 20 years ago—feels pleasurably prescient today, as we witness the possible beginnings of a green revolution. As Adams notes: "There is little doubt in my mind that *El Dorado* was the result of watching the slow but irreversible advance of human development and exploitation of the natural setting, particularly as I witness in rural California. The effect of the human species on the planet is a conundrum. We are part of the natural ecology. We don't stand apart from it, yet we bear the responsibility for our unique powers."

The "Place," then, that Adams memorializes in "Sounds" here is the one he hopes we can recover; perhaps taking a cue from David Lang, we could re-conceive Adams's musical admonition as "This is the place where we should want to live together."