

# INTRODUCTION

As I write these words, it's less than a month away from the tenth anniversary of John Cage's death on August 12, 1992. John Cage stays on my mind a lot these days, and since one of his works is included on this disc, I hope you won't mind if I share some thoughts about him with you. Cage wanted us to get away from our likes and dislikes, from imposing our own sense of what art "means" onto others — of assuming that we know best. He wanted us to learn all our lives, but I think he felt we were our own best teachers or, if we weren't, that we learned best from others when we didn't realize we were studying. Both of these ideas helped to crystallize, in my own mind, the image I have for new music today: a free-wheeling carnival of possibilities, where standards, taste, dogma don't mean what they used to, or where these words have lost their force. Cage's optimism helped to open up a way of thinking about the "new" in music in which the supposed definition of innovation as subversive behavior passes away, replaced by a broader, happier formulation: the new as a hopeful energy for transformation.

But there's a paradox in Cage's influential thought: "Permission granted," he wrote. "But not to do whatever you want." [A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 28.] With that remark, we stand at the precipice just short of relativism, but where do we draw the line? That's the task for younger generations of listeners, performers, and composers—for people who are no longer content to make themselves believe in the imaginary "alienation" of modernity. Optimism, long unfashionable, reappears with all its former vigor.

I won't speculate on the possibility of becoming more tolerant in our worldviews, our politics, our religions. (After all, I'm just writing notes for a recording.) But I will ask a question that inevitably moves into the forefront of the musics in our world ca. 2002: Can we open ourselves up, let other people into the music? Let other music into us? I think we would all be better off if we can, and do. Be willing to be surprised. This is something rather different than questioning authority, questioning our beliefs: that's boring, and a cynical way to live. No, I'm suggesting something different, something that's not very easy. And I admit I'm not very good at it.

And that brings me to Jessica and Payton, my friends who are also a duo ensemble called Verederos. They're my friends, of course, which is why I'm even writing this. And while they're great performers, that's beside the point for me. What is important: They turn music-making into something as ordinary, necessary, and pervasive as cooking, or walking,

or breathing. They listen to the music around them—lots of music—with the same care that they listen to other people. And when they play, I can sense all those musical traditions and repertoires that we talk about and listen to together. I hear them not as if they were transplanted from world cultures into the Western Classical Music Hothouse, but more like being at a party with old and new friends. They make performance into something that's almost holistic. But there's no oat bran, no crystals, no incense. (No mushrooms, either.) Like the experience of studying with Cage's serendipitous teachers, you don't realize you're being healed. That's their gift.

Rob Haskins

## FRAME

Graham Fitkin

Frame was composed in 1991. Like many of my pieces, Frame proceeds by the alternation of disparate blocks of music. As is the case in other works the pulse remains the same throughout the piece. Each block of material is developed in parallel, using a hefty amount of repetition, and is modified, extended and truncated according to some peculiar number system. The reason for using this system was not arbitrary however, but designed to create and build tension and unpredictability throughout the piece. Let's hope it does.

G. F.

**Graham Fitkin** studied composition at Nottingham University with Peter Nelson and at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague with Louis Andriessen. Fitkin has written music for orchestra, various chamber ensembles and musical theatre. Fitkin is well known as a pianist as well as a composer and frequently performs his own music with the Graham Fitkin Group. The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Icebreaker, London Chamber Orchestra, the New York City Ballet and the Munic Ballet have performed Fitkin's work.

## ARIADNE

Lou Harrison

In 1936, Henry Cowell (1897-1965) introduced Lou Harrison to the idea of a music kit, or what Cowell called elastic form. A music kit is a score containing musical phrases or ideas that the performers may arrange, combine, or link in any way indicated. This open form allows the performers to engage in the compositional process of the piece, and also lets them change and reconsider their interpretation from performance to performance. The second movement of *Ariadne* is a music kit. Harrison composed 7 melodic phrases and 7 rhythmic phrases. Each phrase has a total of 22 beats. Presented with that, the only other instructions to the performers are, "these phrases may be enchainned in any sequence in any octave indicated, repeated, or silenced for an equal time and in any relationship with the percussion phrases."

The first movement of this piece, *Ariadne Abandoned*, is a free, recitative-like lament. Harrison wrote the piece for his friend Eva Soltes, a dancer who had, in 1986, recently returned from India, where she studied the south Indian dance form *bharata-natyam*. *Ariadne*, abandoned by Theseus, the king of Athens, was rescued from the island of Naxos by Dionysos, the god of wine, who had been in India. The first movement of *Ariadne* has a subtle reference to an *alap*, the slow, improvised section of an Indian raga. The cyclical rhythmic structure of the second movement could be loosely compared to the rhythmic *tal* section of an Indian raga. As a result, Soltes could blend her western and Indian dance skills during performance. The free, changeable form of the piece allowed her room to improvise and vary the length of her performances.

*Ariadne* was first performed on May 14, 1987. William Winant, percussionist, and David Colvig, flutist, accompanied Eva Soltes, dancer.

J. J.

**Lou Harrison** studied composition with Henry Cowell and Arnold Schoenberg. Early in his career he worked as a florist, record clerk, poet, dancer and dance critic, music copyist, playwright, and builder of instruments. He has studied music in Korea and has been intensely involved with Gamelan music for several decades. One of the pioneers in combining western music with music from other cultures, Lou Harrison achieves a high degree of originality while revealing a thorough and authentic technique. He states: "The whole round world of musics and instruments lives around us. I am interested in a transethnic, a planetary music."

## PRELUDES 2-4

Payton MacDonald

Preludes have played an integral part in the history of Western classical music for at least 600 years. Although general stylistic changes have been dramatic from the late medieval, early Renaissance era to the present day, several compositional features of the prelude genre have remained intact. Preludes are typically played before something else, often a fugue. Most preludes are short and are improvisatory in nature. Indeed, composed preludes are often outgrowths from actual improvisations. Even though most Western classical musicians no longer practice improvisation, many organists still maintain the art form, especially through the medium of preludes.

These preludes are short snapshots of musical ideas that interest me at a given time in my life. The works on this recording are quite different from the first prelude we recorded over five years ago. I suspect the preludes on the next recording will be different still. If there is any thread of continuity between these works it is in the characteristic elements of the genre as described above. Also, I value virtuosity, both from an individual and collective standpoint. These are not easy pieces, so that attitude undoubtedly surfaces.

P. M.

## IN COMMON

Stuart Saunders Smith

*In Common* is about marriage. I used quite different compositional systems—one for the flute, one for the vibraphone—to represent the baggage of a previous life each partner brings to the marriage. There is one impossible passage to show the impossible aspects of marriage. The performers are surrounded by gongs which occasionally ring sympathetically. Only the players hear these secrets.

S. S. S.

**Stuart Saunders Smith** earned a DMA in composition at the University of Illinois. He studied with Edward Miller, Edward Diemente, Salvatore Martirano, Herbert Brün and Benjamin Johnston. Stuart Saunders Smith is not an eclectic, but his style is unpredictable from piece to piece. He is, rather, in the forefront of a trend to encompass in one output the diversity of the contemporary music world. His interest in notation and in indeterminate composition has developed into pieces which will work for any performer, even an actor or a dancer. This has led him into a kind of theater which has reintegrated the arts at their compositional roots. The unifying thread in all of his works is a primary interest in the psychology of performance.

From the journals of Phineas Mxtor:

The last several days have certainly tried my will. A fortnight ago we passed into the land of Ud. We moved quickly through kilometer after kilometer of scrub brush. Most of Ud is nothing but high desert. We encountered no persons or other creatures until we descended upon Ip, the sole metropolis in this god-forsaken country. I was tempted to move on, but our camels were almost as parched as we were and we desperately needed directions for our journey to Giggbdgldmertz, land of the feared Gdtret.

Surely bedlam is better than Ip. Beggars line the streets, howling and crying for food. Bandits and thugs rumble by on dusty jeeps spewing noxious fumes. The buildings are short and squat, many gutted and burned out. Flies buzz on everything, an acoustic counterpart to the pervading stench. It was in this hell that I drank Ikky Gober.

I had no choice. Ud custom decrees that all travelers must indulge in a drink on the house; to refuse would be cause for expulsion. We needed information but none would be made available until I accepted the proffered beverage. I should have known I was in for an upset when the bartender laughed and smirked, barking out jokes to his friends, all in that hideous tongue that passes for a language.

At first I felt nothing, but within an hour hallucinations of the most grotesque sort overcame me. The walls pulsed with a strange rhythm, awkward and unnatural. In front of me appeared a huge set of tabla, those beautiful drums I remember from my journeys in India. A terrifying giant creature, much like the fabled Gdtret, played them, lost in mystic bliss. The flies became a drone, insistent, relentless. And from some corner of my consciousness a flute-like tone sang above in a mode of no familiar praxis.

In this state I sweated through four long days. Trusty Reeg tells me I spoke only in delirium, babbling about tabla and drones, flies and flutes. Only this morning did I snap awake, as if from a nightmare. My companions dressed and cleaned me. As I finish this entry I hear them bustling about, preparing to leave the horrible land of Ud.

A series of approximately ten semi-transparent, grey circles of varying sizes are arranged in a loose, upward-curving arc across the top half of the page. The circles are scattered, with some appearing in pairs or small groups.

## CON MOTO

Joseph Michaels

The music for *Con Moto* (Italian, “with motion”) is based on the idea of pushing forwards towards a goal, but never quite reaching it: the music begins and stops four times, starting low in intensity and building each time, until it finally resolves to dissolve in the coda. The piece was written in January 2000 for Payton MacDonald and Jessica Johnson.

J. M.

**Joseph Michaels** studied at the Eastman School of Music with Augusta Read Thomas and Joseph Schwantner. He is currently pursuing graduate studies at the University of California at San Diego. He has produced a varied body of works for numerous ensembles. His music is performed nationwide.

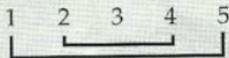
A series of approximately ten semi-transparent, grey circles of varying sizes are arranged in a loose, downward-curving arc across the bottom half of the page. The circles are scattered, with some appearing in pairs or small groups, mirroring the arrangement in the top half.

## MOVEMENT OF VARIED MOMENTS FOR TWO

Ralph Shapey

As Shapey's title implies, the five sections of the work are varied: diverse, dynamic, and surprising. Yet, after several listenings a consistency reveals itself. The fifth movement is almost an exact duplicate of the first, but only in pitch and rhythm. By dropping the tempo 20 beats per minute and introducing vibrato to the vibraphone, Shapey transforms an initial impulse (lyrical and personal) into a final consideration (still and private). Four of the five movements end with a chorale. In each subsequent repetition he varies the material by adding or subtracting pitches, changing tempo, or adjusting the speed of the vibrato. Only the fourth movement stands alone from these micro codas, but it too finishes with an F sharp/C sharp dyad, a quick nod to remind us of the work's compositional unity.

Shapey arranged the five varied movements in a symmetrical arc form that has been popular for least the last 100 years:



Parts one and five are almost identical, sections two and four share a punchy, crisp texture, and the third movement lives quietly by itself.

And that's the gem. Listen. This is Shapey's internal world, a complex of emotions and thoughts by a mature artist, masterfully clarified into just a few perfect notes: clear and direct, rich and subtle. Every gesture counts and each phrase must be handled lovingly. We are not playing music here, we are handling sensitive documents—an aural record of an artist's mind and heart in a moment, a movement of contemplation.

P. M.

**Ralph Shapey:** American conductor, teacher, and composer. He studied violin with Emanuel Zeitlin and composition with Stefan Wolpe. In 1954, he founded and became music director of the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. In 1964, he was made professor of music at the University of Chicago. In 1982 he became a MacArthur Fellow, and in 1989 was elected a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

## AUS DEM KNAST FÜR TIERE WIRD EIN ÖKOSYSTEM

Cenk Ergun

Summer. On the plane to Istanbul. Airline magazine article title: *Aus dem Knast für Tiere wird ein Ökosystem* (Once Imprisoned Animals Now Live in Ecosystems). Bike rides by the Marmara. Yamaha keyboard: flute and steel drum settings. My mom in the kitchen. My room in Suadiye. Humidity, humidity.

The choices of instrumentation and performers are the most important decisions I make while composing. When Jessica and Payton asked me to write a piece for them, it was as if half of the piece had already been composed since I knew they were excellent musicians, and the combination of flute/steel drum interested me very much. Jessica and Payton are excellent not only because they clearly and fully understand what the composer asks for, but also because they add their elegant personal touch to the music, turning the performance into a complete collaboration between the composer and the performers. It goes without saying that the duo's technical ability is exceptional.

C. E.

Cenk Ergün studied composition at the Eastman School of Music (BM, 1999), and is presently pursuing graduate studies in composition at Mills College in San Francisco, California. Ergün's work explores repetitious musical figures and extremes of dynamic expressivity.



## MUSIC FOR TWO

John Cage

Cage wrote *Music For Two* towards the end of his life. Traces of the intense virtuosity that interested him in the late 1970s linger. But a new kind of freedom has surfaced with the time bracket notation and he gradually began composing simpler, more serene pieces. The time bracket system provided an elegant opportunity for Cage to exercise some degree of control over his musical materials while simultaneously allowing his performers some choice. The pitches and dynamics are specifically notated, and rhythms are presented in a loose kind of time and space notation. But encompassing the beginning and end of every other system are time indications connected by a bilateral arrow. For example, at the top of the first system in the flute part the numbers 0'00"-0'45" appear. At the end of the second system the numbers 0'30"-1'15" are marked. Thus, the flutist may start playing in the time between 0'00" and 0'45" and end any time between 0'30" and 1'15".

There are 20 parts for *Music For*. The parts may be combined and joined together in any number of ways, so long as the performers agree upon a time length for each individual part. The title thus becomes *Music For x*, *x* being the number of performers. The time is flexible, the parts may overlap in myriad ways, and subsequent performances need not be exactly alike. We chose an eight-minute version of the piece. Just as Cage indicates in the instructions, we each prepared a continuous segment of eight minutes, though the beginning points were not the same. And, just as Cage instructs, we practiced our parts individually for several months and combined them only at the recording session. Rather than proscribe a set version for the disc we recorded numerous takes and then chose our favorite one.

As Dr. Haskins indicates in the introductory notes, in many ways this piece is central to our approach toward music making. The specific notation of the parts results in varied passages for both performers. The flute part utilizes extended techniques. Likewise, the percussion part requires broad flexibility. Any given performance or recording will be unique and will harness the special energy that is only available from spontaneous creation of art. Since both Jessica and I have backgrounds in both interpretive music and improvised music, *Music For Two* serves as a nexus point of our aesthetic interests.

P. M.

**John Cage**, son of an inventor, is often regarded as the foremost exponent of the musical avant-garde of the twentieth century. Cage's more than 200 published works reveal a fertile and imaginative mind. Seminal works by Cage include 4'33", a work performed by soloist that consists of 4'33" of silence, and *Sonatas and Interludes*, for prepared piano. Cage studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg and Adolf Weiss.

1. FRAME (1991) Graham Fitkin (b.1963)
- ARIADNE (1987) Lou Harrison (1917-2003)
2. I. Ariadne Abandoned
3. II. The Triumph of Ariadne and Dionysos
- PRELUDES FOR FLUTE AND MARIMBA (2001-2002) Payton MacDonald (b.1974)
4. II.
5. III.
6. IV.
7. IN COMMON (1991) Stuart Saunders Smith (b.1948)
8. IKKY GOBER (2002) Payton MacDonald (b.1974)
9. CON MOTO (2000) Joseph Michaels (b.1976)
- MOVEMENT OF VARIED MOMENTS FOR TWO (1991) Ralph Shapey (1921-2002)
10. III. Cantabile
11. IV. Vivo
12. V. Dolce
13. VI. Rhythmic
14. VII. Cantabile
15. AUS DEM KNAST FÜR TIERE WIRD EIN ÖKOSYSTEM (2000) Cenk Ergün (b.1978)
16. MUSIC FOR TWO (1984) John Cage (1912-1992)



Producers: Payton MacDonald & Jessica Johnson

Executive Producer: Michael W. Udow

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Recording Engineer: Will Spencer

Tonmeister: Michael W. Udow

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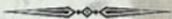
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**Verederos** was formed in 1994 and is comprised of Payton MacDonald, percussion, and Jessica Johnson, flute. The title "Verederos" is a combination of the words "verity," meaning truth, and Eros, the Greek god of passion and desire. Verederos has performed in venues across the United States. Since 1999 Verederos has participated in the highly acclaimed New Performing Arts rural residency program. In 1997 the duo released their first CD, entitled Verederos, Music for Flute and Percussion under the Equilibrium label. Recently, the duo won the National Flute Association's Chamber Music Competition, and appeared at the National Convention in Washington D.C. in August of 2002.

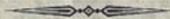
Both members of the duo were educated at the University of Michigan and the Eastman School of Music, where they were both awarded the prestigious Performer's Certificate. Currently Johnson is completing a Doctorate at the University of Wisconsin Madison. She teaches flute at Edgewood College in Madison. MacDonald directs the percussion and world music programs at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. He has published articles in Percussive Notes and 21st Century Music. His compositions have been performed by a variety of professional and academic ensembles across the country. Both Johnson and MacDonald write music criticism for American Record Guide. For more information on Verederos, please visit [www.paytonmacdonald.com](http://www.paytonmacdonald.com)



This recording is dedicated to our teachers: John Beck, Bob Becker, Bonita Boyd, Leone Buyse, Stephanie Jutt, Adam Kuenzel, Richard Landauer, Tim Lane, Fran Leek, Robert Morris, Pandit Sharda Sahai, Stuart Saunders Smith, Julie Spencer, Jeanne Swack, Augusta Read Thomas, Michael Udow

Thanks: Will Spencer, Nancy Udow, our families

Special Thanks: Michael Udow



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