

dimension (di-men-sion)

1. referring to magnitude and proportion.
2. a quality or character.
3. referring to space-time.
4. coordinates in mathematical space.

There are many ways of understanding this word, *dimension*. As I prepared for this recording, and the music began to reveal itself, it was as if each individual work was unhurriedly, yet persistently aligning itself with some facet of *dimension*. The concept of musical space-time in Ishii's *Thirteen Drums*, hints of Cubism in Satie's *Danses de travers*, even the coordinates in space for *Mare Tranquillitatis*—all seemed to find a subtle unity with the next. It's within this unity, that I hope each listener finds their own meaningful, *dimension*.

—Mark Berry

Danses de travers (from Pièces Froides)

Erik Satie (adapted for marimba by Mark Berry)

Erik Satie's piano work *Pièces Froides* (1897) is comprised of two three-movement pieces, the first of these being *Airs à faire fuir* (tunes to make you run away), the second, *Danses de travers* (slanted dances). Satie (1866-1925) often wrote music around a single idea yet, approaching it from several different ways—much like a visual artist studying a subject from many perspectives before painting. His music is at times, antithetical to, and perhaps reactionary to the soaring heights of the late nineteenth-century virtuoso performer, and the Wagnerian sense of "music-for-posterity" that the twentieth-century inherited.

Upon first hearing *Danses de travers*, I was immediately drawn to the work not only by its unfussiness and charm, but by its sweeping elongated phrases. The more I listened, the more I began to hear the expressive possibilities of a marimba adaptation. The arpeggiated triads in the left hand—1-5-3, 1-5-3, 1-5-3—seemed to establish the perfect foundation on which to overlay Satie's crooked melodies in octaves. Satie in the first measure of the score, in a whimsically nonsensical way—perhaps with a touch of *dadaism*—instructs the performer, "En y regardant à deux fois". This adaptation has afforded me the opportunity to "get a second look at" Satie's music from another angle, and with a new perspective.

Thirteen Drums for percussion solo, op. 66

Maki Ishii

The drums are numbered one through thirteen—one being the highest drum (in terms of relative pitch) and thirteen being the lowest drum. The score is a thirteen-line staff. Maki Ishii (1934-2003) specifies that the thirteenth drum be a bass drum, played with a pedal. Other than the pedal bass drum, the score does not specify the exact type of drums to be used, nor does it specify how to or where to arrange the instruments. Ishii's intentional lack of

specificity helps to create a vital, defining concept which shapes the piece—his concept of musical *space-time*.

... I also intended simply to challenge the eternal theme of percussion, the return to the hitting [of] drums, [the] original point of percussion and to seek the new space-time by the interplay of determinate and indeterminate rhythms.

—Maki Ishii

Ishii's words provide insight into his musical intentions for *Thirteen Drums*—that is, to challenge all things percussive. For inspiration, he looks to a primitive time, perhaps before the complexities of rhythm were fully understood—a time predating modern concepts such as mixed meter, odd time signatures, and metric modulation. His goal is to go back to the original point—the genesis of percussion—a “return to the hitting of drums.” However, what does Ishii mean by “the new space-time”?

Ishii uses the term *space-time* within the musical context of his piece. Of course the word *space-time* also occurs in scientific theories such as those put forth by Albert Einstein. Einstein's teacher, Hermann Minkowski says the following of time and space, and though his words are from a scientific perspective, they help to illuminate the notion of *space-time* from a musical viewpoint.

*Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.*¹

This kind of union between space and time has implications to percussion and musical composition. The following quote is in reference to another composition by Ishii, *Search in Grey for percussion solo, Op. 37* written in 1978, predating *Thirteen Drums*.

*These instruments are arranged in a circle around the soloist. The soloist is then performing on the respective instruments counterclockwise describing a circle. Thus the performing technique of the soloist ... determines the tempo of the performance, the timing of the circular movement. In other words, the movements of the soloist play an important role for determining the musical time of the composition.*²

Ishii was indeed aware of the relationship between the physical layout of instruments and the performer's physical movements around the instruments. Not only was he aware of these things, he was composing specifically for them as an integral part of the work. Along with reference to physical space, he describes how one determines the other—how physical movement, around the space of an instrument configuration, determines musical *time*.

Ishii's *space-time* is also created as he instructs the performer to play *as fast as possible* through certain passages. The configuration of the instruments along with the performer's dexterity plays a large role in determining the musical result. Ishii then includes rhythmic grace notes that purposefully distort many rhythms even further. These instructions create his idea of *determinate and indeterminate* rhythms—rhythms that are determinate in their composition, yet indeterminate in their realization.

1. from Hermann Minkowski's address delivered at the 80th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians, September 21, 1908.
2. Camerata 32CM-313, 1994.

With *Thirteen Drums*, Ishii has created a work that necessitates further reflection beyond physical accessibility to the instruments—where configuring the instruments within a given space not only affects musical phrasing, intensity, and the performer's ability to accurately realize the score, but allows the piece to transmute and be different. Given that there is no prescribed instrument setup in the score, the piece will morph naturally from performer to performer. Nonetheless, the composer's choice to not specify an instrument setup is not license for the performer to configure the instruments in a way that is arbitrary or without attention to other musical considerations, particularly the visual proportions and relationships within the score. Of all the musical interpretations the performer must make in the process of learning the piece, how to configure the instruments—how to utilize space—is perhaps the most crucial in *Thirteen Drums*.

Piece for Oboe and Improvisatory Percussion **Alec Wilder**

Alec Wilder (February 16, 1907-December 24, 1980) was born Alexander Lafayette Chew Wilder to a prominent family in Rochester, New York. He studied composition and counterpoint privately at the Eastman School of Music but as a composer was largely self-taught. As a young man he moved to New York City and made the Algonquin Hotel—that remarkable enclave of American literati and artistic intelligentsia—his permanent home, although he traveled widely and often. It is a relative rarity for a composer to enjoy a close musical kinship with classical musicians, jazz musicians and popular singers. Wilder was such a composer, endearing himself to a relatively small but very loyal coterie of performers, and successfully appealing to their diverse styles and conceptions.³

When first approached by oboist, Michele Fiala to play *Piece for Oboe and Improvisatory Percussion*, my first thought—perhaps from hearing other performances of the work, or from a familiarity with additional pieces written by Wilder for flute and bongos—was to select non-pitched percussion instruments (woodblocks, triangles, bongos, etc.) to create the improvisation. However in this particular piece, Wilder, having written several works for wind instruments and non-pitched percussion, did not specify that the percussion be non-pitched, only that it be improvisatory. I began to consider the possibilities of a pitched percussion instrument for the improvisation.

Wilder left the improvisation to the discretion of the percussionist. He did not write a percussion score or part, only a part for the oboist. To begin work on the piece, I familiarized myself with the oboe part by playing through it several times at the piano. I soon became intrigued by the work's quirkiness, simplicity, and inventiveness. What captured my attention most was this quality of being "not quite jazz", while simultaneously being "not quite classical". Most of this, it seemed to me, came less from rhythm, and more from Wilder's skillful melodic writing. I quickly became interested in an improvisation in which I could explore, and try to "get inside" Wilder's melodic language (laced with wonderful harmonic implications), along with the oboe part. I began working to memorize the oboe part and understand its content, so that I could better create improvisations at the marimba. The marimba was chosen as the improvisatory percussion instrument for its expressive qualities, and its ability to complement the similar qualities of the oboe.

3. from the 2007 Alec Wilder centennial concert program, Merkin Hall, New York City. Used by permission of TRO - Ludlow Music, Inc., New York, NY on behalf of The Friends of Alec Wilder.

MARE TRANQUILLITATIS *for amplified steelpan, crotales, digital delay and pitch-shifter*

Mark Berry

Mare Tranquillitatis is one of the nineteen major lunar maria. A large basin on the northern hemisphere of the moon, it is where humans first set foot. The piece loosely depicts a journey to this place, either physically or in one's imagination.

Premiered at the 2004 College Music Society Great Lakes Chapter Conference, the piece explores both rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint with the player's own echo. The digital delay creates a rhythmic echo and the pitch-shifter regenerates selected notes two octaves lower, sounding very much like a bass steelpan. The performance takes place completely in real-time. There are no sequences or pre-recorded sections. Control of rhythmic accuracy through metric-modulations is essential, as the performer must play precisely with the digital delay. Both expression and control of steelpan tone-quality are also of utmost importance.

Heliospheric II *for vibraphone and violoncello*

Mark Berry

The *heliosphere* is the outer margin of the solar wind—a bubble of charged particles expanding outward in space against interstellar forces. The formal structure of the piece is outlined in seven connected sections labeled *Radiative, Flare, Glow, Core, Current (ballerina), Convection, and Pause* in the musical score. As one section flows into the next, each conveys a particular physical characteristic of the heliosphere. As an example, one such characteristic, the *heliospheric current*, is represented in the section *Current (ballerina)* by rolling string-crossings from the cello and spiraling, slightly blurred lines from the vibraphone. The *heliospheric current* is the undulation in the heliosphere generated by the Sun's magnetic field. This swirling ripple is often described by scientists as resembling a "ballerina's skirt". *Heliospheric II* was premiered at the 2009 Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities.

"scraps of echos ... "

John Welsh

"scraps of echos ... " is a tribute to the Futurists who, at the turn of the twentieth century, created abstract sonic adventures with non-traditional sound sources—noise. Their exploration of sound—with free words and noise instruments—along with an intense fervor of execution and dedication has sustained itself through the experimental traditions in the United States and Europe. Thus, the context for contemporary Western percussion music is born out of the imagination of Futurists like Luigi Russolo and F.T. Marinetti. The work receives its title from a letter of free words written by Marinetti in 1916 describing the beautifully organized sounds of a battle: "every 5 seconds seige cannons gutting space with a chord ZANG-TUMB-TUUUMB ... cutting off slighter noises very small scraps of echos ..." The title also makes reference to the structure of the work. The duration of the five sections and their subsections, dynamics, and attack density are all initially far-ranging. Each new section reveals, in turn,

just a trace or fragment of the preceding materials and structures.⁴

Having performed this snare-drum solo on several occasions, I continue to be intrigued by both its Futurist influence and its use of intricate rhythmic structures, particularly the many varying fragments of quintuplets and septuplets found throughout. These fragments, these scraps—often so complex that they sound arrhythmic—capture perfectly the Futurist's fascination with the "art of noise".

The Final Precipice for five timpani and computer-generated tape **Jeffrey Peyton**

Jeffrey Peyton has written works on commission for orchestra, band, solo percussion, electronic media, and mixed chamber ensembles. His works have been performed throughout the United States, as well as in Taiwan, Sweden, Denmark, China, Belgium, Germany, and Mexico. He is currently instructor of percussion and electronic music at Pacific University. From 1994-2000, Mr. Peyton served as Artistic Director and conductor of the Third Angle New Music Ensemble in Portland, Oregon. He received his undergraduate degree from George Fox University, and holds a Masters Degree in performance from the Juilliard School in New York.

The electronic portion of *The Final Precipice* was realized at the University of Oregon Electronic Music studio (Future Music Oregon). It was chosen by juried competition for performance at the 1994 SEAMUS (Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States) national conference. The Final Precipice also won second place in the 1995 Percussive Arts Society Percussion with Tape composition contest.

The Final Precipice is a *tour-de-force* for the modern timpanist. The opening flare, like the striking of a match, bursts and gives way to an explosive series of sweeping gestures across the five timpani. Syncopated punctuations add urgency to this phrase which the score designates to be played *with unrelenting intensity*. The work unfolds into contrasting textures as the timpani and computer-generated tape create a unified whole. The piece demands numerous pitch-changes from the timpanist via mechanical foot-pedals on the drums. The composer's skillful use of intervallic relationships, particularly the minor-ninth (arguably one of the most dissonant intervals); challenge the timpanist's control of intonation. Lastly, dissonances are resolved and the work concludes with a dramatic cadential roll.

4. from introductory notes to "scraps of echos ..." by John Welsh, in *The Noble Snare: Compositions for Unaccompanied Snare Drum*. Copyright Smith Publications. Used by permission of Smith Publications, Baltimore, MD 21207.

As timpanist and percussionist Dr. Mark Berry has performed with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra, and the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra. He is currently Principal Timpanist with the Bowling Green Chamber Orchestra, a position he has held since 2002. In a chamber music setting, Dr. Berry's percussion playing can be heard on several recordings on the Equilibrium and Centaur labels. He has commissioned new works for flute and percussion, and performs regularly with the percussion/cello duo, *Col Legno*. Dr. Berry's performance interests lie not only in symphonic genres, but in other genres as well. He actively performs on both drumset and steelpan in small combo settings. His steel band arrangements have been premiered at The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. He has also served as percussion writer, arranger, instructor, adjudicator, and consultant with band programs throughout the Midwest. Dr. Berry has received grant awards from the Kentucky Arts Council, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, and Western Kentucky University. He has earned degrees from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan (DMA Performance, MM Performance) and is Assistant Professor of Percussion at Western Kentucky University where he teaches applied lessons and directs the percussion ensemble. Dr. Berry has previously taught percussion at West Virginia University and the University of Michigan, Flint.

Sarah Berry is Principal Cellist with the Bowling Green Western Symphony Orchestra. She has performed with the San Antonio Symphony, the Charleston Symphony, Orchestra Kentucky, and performs regularly with the percussion/cello duo, *Col Legno*. She is a frequent guest clinician at the Levine School of Music Winter Chamber Music Workshop in Washington, D.C. and also serves on the faculty of the Tennessee Valley Summer Music Festival. She holds a Masters degree in Cello Performance from Rice University, and Bachelor's degrees in both Cello Performance and German from Vanderbilt University. Her teachers include Norman Fischer, Felix Wang and Grace Mihi Bahng. She is a Professional-in-Residence at Western Kentucky University where she teaches cello and directs the summer string festival.

Dr. Michele Fiala has performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Canada. She has performed in the Banff Summer Music Festival, Louisville Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Orchestra Nashville, and with Lee Ann Rimes, Roberta Flack, Trey Anastasio, and Barry Williams. She also appears on MSR Classics and Centaur Records. Dr. Fiala contributes to the Italian journal *i Fatti and to Double Reed*. She is Assistant Professor of Oboe and Music Theory at Ohio University. She holds DMA and MM degrees from Arizona State University, where she studied with Martin Schuring.

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Dances de Travers (from Pièces Froides) (C Alan Publications, ASCAP)
(adapted for marimba by Mark Berry)

1. I 1:16
2. II 1:05
3. III 1:56
4. Thirteen Drums for percussion solo, Op. 66 (Mannheimer Musikverlag, GEMA) Maki Ishii 12:34
5. Piece for Oboe and Improvisatory Percussion (Margun Music, BMI)
Michele Fiala, oboe Alec Wilder 4:08
6. MARE TRANQUILLITATIS (TapSPACE Publications, ASCAP)
for amplified steelpan, crotales, digital delay and pitch-shifter Mark Berry 10:29
7. Heliospheric II for vibraphone and violoncello (Quaoar, ASCAP)
Sarah Berry, violoncello Mark Berry 10:24
8. "scraps of echos ... " (Smith Publications, ASCAP) John Welsh 5:52
9. The Final Precipice for Five Timpani and Computer Generated Tape
(Cascadia Publications) Jeffrey Peyton 10:22

Total Time: 58:25

DIMENSION

Mark Berry, *percussion*



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