

The Electric Phoenix

Singers: Judith Rees, Meriel Dickinson, Daryl Runswick, Terry Edwards

Sound Design: John Whiting

Gerald M. Shapiro was born in Philadelphia in 1942 and attended public schools there. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Music with distinction from the Eastman School of Music in 1964 and continued with graduate work at Mills College, the University of California at Davis, and the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Musique where he studied under a Fulbright grant. His principal teachers of composition during this period were Darius Milhaud, Mort Subotnick, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Nadia Boulanger. In 1967 he accepted a position at Brown University where he remains, currently as professor and chairman of the Music Department. Recent works have included *Phoenix* and *Prayer for the Great Family* both written for the British vocal ensemble, Electric Phoenix; *Trio for Piano, Cello, and Percussion* for the Aequalis chamber ensemble of Boston; and *Mount Hope in Autumn*, commissioned and premiered by the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra.



The phoenix, a fabulous desert bird of great antiquity, lives for 700 years then builds and ignites his own funeral pyre and is consumed in the flames. Out of the ashes an infant bird is born to repeat the cycle. Of its whole life we know little and care less. It is the moment of transition—the passage from life to death to rebirth—that kindles the imagination. *Phoenix* was finished shortly after the birth of my third child, Emily, and is dedicated to her. It was written for Electric Phoenix, who lend their name as well as their talents to this, our second collaboration. It is about transitions—musical and otherwise, the death of love, the birth of my daughter, a certain way of integrating disparate harmonies into a single flow. The piece owes a great deal to my (perhaps overly imaginative) reading of two extraordinary books: Edward L. Schieffelin's *The Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of the Dancers* and Steven

feld's *Sound and Sentiment*. They describe the music and ritual of the Kaluli people of New Guinea and in particular a ceremony that is capable of inducing the keenest sense of loss and mourning among its listeners.

The electronic exotica for *Phoenix* consists principally of a pair of Yamaha SPX-90s. These allow for manipulation of the voices in a number of ways and, used with two microphones for each singer and foot switches to change from one program to another, for quick changes in effect, or two effects at once. There is a wonderful freedom in this system to create timbres and textures that are linked to the sound at the moment of performance and so can evolve with the performance as the singers learn the piece.

The text is mostly invented language and scat syllables. A brief section in English is given below.

Now my days are just the echoes
of our lost emotions flowing
to the river, to the ocean.
Now my nights are scattered embers
faintly glowing in the darkness.
Red-winged Blackbird by the water
singing softly of my sorrow;
singing softly in the rushes,
clear and sweet the echoes falling
to the river, to the ocean.

• • •

—Gerald Shapiro

Electric Phoenix is a mixed vocal quintet plus sound designer with a commitment to the development of consort music through close involvement with extended vocal techniques and sophisticated electronic manipulation. Based in London, their reputation through concert tours, records, and broadcasts (TV & Radio) has established them as one of the most remarkable vocal groups in Europe and America.

JONATHAN BERGER • An Island of Tears

Jonathan Berger, born 1954 in New York, is Associate Professor of composition at the Yale School of Music and is the Director of the Yale Center for Studies in Music Technology. His works are performed widely in Europe, Canada, Israel and the Americas and has been honored with numerous awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, ASCAP, Morse and Mellon Fellowships and Bourges Prizes for electroacoustic music. He has been invited to participate in festivals such as the Bienale (Venice) and the Tercer Foro Internacional de Musica Nueva (Mexico City). He has received commissions from the Detroit Symphony Chamber Winds and the West German Radio (for cellist Siegfried Palm), among others. Berger studied at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem, California Institute for the Arts, and Stanford University and has written symphonic and chamber works, as well as works for computer generated and processed tape. His works can be heard on the Harmonia Mundi, Centaur Records and CCRMA labels.



Millions of immigrants awaited permission to enter the United States at Ellis Island, the largest processing and detention center for aliens during the first half of this century. Fear of expulsion, or worse, refusal of entry to a family member branded Ellis Island *The Island of Tears*.

An Island of Tears is a tribute to my immigrant roots and to the plight of today's refugees and exiles throughout the world.

The work was realized at the Center for Studies in Music and Acoustics at Stanford University. ***An Island of Tears*** employs various flavors of synthesis by frequency modulation. Much of the synthesis is based on William Schottstaedt's *allviolin*, a flexible FM instrument that models bowed string sounds.

An Island of Tears is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my Grandmother, Dora Bard.

—Jonathan Berger

Luca Paccagnella, Cello

James Dashow, born 1944 in Chicago, studied with Babbitt, Cone, Randall and Kim at Princeton University, with Berger, Shifrin, and Boykan at Brandeis University and with Petrassi at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Roma. For several years he directed the Forum Players in Roma, a contemporary music ensemble, and is now director of the Studio di Musica Elettronica Sciadoni. He had been associated as composer and teacher with the Centro di Sonologia Computazionale of the University of Padova.

Dashow has composed for large and small ensembles, solo pieces, and opera; in recent years he has concentrated on the realization of digitally synthesized musical works. He has been the recipient of numerous prizes and commissions, among which are a Fulbright fellowship to Roma, first prize at the V Concours International di Musique Electroacoustique (Bourges), two NEA (USA) grants for works with soloist and computer generated electronic accompaniment, two commissions from Venice Biennale, a Rockefeller Foundation grant, the American Academy and Institute of Arts And Letters prize, and a Guggenheim grant.

Dashow has been invited to present solo concerts of his work for acoustic and electronic instruments at major new music festivals and in conjunction with European national radio networks. He has also lectured widely in the US and Europe about the musical concepts and sound synthesis techniques he has developed for the computer. He has taught at MIT and at Princeton University. Dashow currently directs a weekly broadcast of contemporary music for Italian National Radio (RAI), a series that has continued for 5 years. He contributes regularly to several magazines, including *Perspectives of New Music*, for which he also acts as associate editor, *Computer Music Journal*, and *La Musica*.

Other recordings of Dashow's music are on RCA (Italy), WERGO, PAN (Italy), ProViva (Germany), and CRI (USA).

Disclosures explores intertwinings of cello and computer sounds, and the way such weavings can produce a musical space perceived simultaneously as whole complexes of one, two or multiple dimensions, and the way interactions of these simultaneous perceptions contribute to a larger sense of a complex whole.

There is a continuous interplay between a dynamically evolving pitch structure brought to the foreground by the cello and the electronic sounds derived from these same pitches treated as relatively static background intervallic material. In effect, the computer provides not only a linear counterpoint to the cello, but also a kind of inharmonic harmonization of the cello notes within the context of an active, largely asymmetric formal structure. The abundance of detail especially in the computer part leaves a great deal of room for expressive interpretation on the part of the soloist.

Disclosures, was composed for several cellist friends of the composer; the computer part was realized at CSC of the University of Padova using the composer's version of the MUSIC360 program for digital sound synthesis (B. Vercoe); post-synthesis digital mixing was completed with ICMS (G. Tisato). The sound engineer for this project was Giovanni Fornari, EDI-PAN Studio, Rome, Italy.

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Luca Paccagnella received his training at the Rovigo (Italy) Conservatory and subsequently completed advanced studies with Meunier, Flaksmann, Georgian and others. Besides regular concert appearances in major new music festivals in Rome, Linz, Berlin, Venice, etc., Paccagnella is principal cellist for several chamber ensembles, in particular the recently formed Esterhazy Trio which has already gained a prestigious international reputation through concerts in Paris, Australia and many Italian cities. Paccagnella currently teaches courses in chamber music for strings at the Rovigo Conservatory.

JOHN DUESENBERY • *Agitato (Ergo Sum) for Gustav Ciamaga*

John Duesenberry has been active in electroacoustic music since the mid-1970's, when he co-founded the affectionately-remembered Boston School of Electronic Music. His work has been performed widely in North America, as well

as in Europe and Australia. He has been an Artists Foundation Fellow, a winner of the League/ISCM New England Composers Competition and a Millay Colony resident. He written technical articles (or *Computer Music Journal*, *Electronic Musician*, and other publications. His music has been recorded on the Opus One label and on a CD released at the 1989 International Computer Music Conference.



Agitato (Ergo Sum) comprises six sections of roughly equal length. Its quality of agitation (in both senses of excitement and disturbance) increases progressively throughout the first five sections. The means used to achieve this quality vary from section to section. They include highly irregular rhythms and phrase lengths, continually fluctuating tempi, sharp interruptive gestures, and angular melodic lines assigned to a hyper-flute which emits inharmonic notes at restive moments. After the overall arc of tension peaks, the final section functions as a coda—dissipating rather than resolving that tension.

The piece's opening gesture—an electronic swelling which “collides” with a flute solo recurs in mutant form throughout, and acts as a unifying device. The fourth and fifth sections of the piece are themselves large-scale expansions of this idea: a kind of *perpetuum mobile* builds to peak intensity and connects violently to an episode of percussive and chordal eruptions.

Composed in 1990, ***Agitato (Ergo Sum)*** is the second in a projected series of electronic compositions which explore the notion of a “virtual soloist” giving a nuanced performance upon an “instrument” whose timbral and expressive qualities derive from a recognizable acoustic instrument or family of instruments. In this case, the solo instrument is the aforementioned hyper-flute, which exceeds the capabilities of an acoustic flute with respect to range, timbre, and capacity for coordination and blending with the surrounding electronic ensemble.

Agitato was composed in 1990, most of the work being done at the Millay Colony for the Arts. It was produced using a modest collection of MIDI instruments, effects processors, and Macintosh software. The work is dedicated to my friend and fellow-composer, Gustav Ciamaga.

—John Dusenberry

PETER CHILD • *Ensemble* (1982)

The Boston Musica Viva

J. Fenwick Smith, flute; William Wrzesien, clarinet; Stephen Drury, piano; Dean Anderson, percussion; Nancy Cirillo, violin; Katherine Murdock, viola; Ronald Thomas, cello
Richard Pittman, conductor

Born in Great Yarmouth, England in 1953, Peter Child has lived in the United States since 1973; he is presently Associate Professor of Music at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Child received his doctorate in composition from Brandeis University in 1981, and his principal teachers were William Albright, Arthur Berger, Martin Boykan, Jacob Druckman, and Seymour Shifrin. *Ensemble* was chosen for a 'New Works' Prize at the New England Conservatory on 1983. His music has also earned awards from Tanglewood, WGBH Radio, East and West Artists, and League/ISCM, Boston, as well as Composition Fellowships from the Massachusetts Artists Foundation in 1986 and 1989. He has received fellowships from the Watson Foundation, the MacDowell Colony, and the Composers' Conference, and four 'New Works' commissions from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. Child's music has been recorded for the CRI and MCA labels. His compositions are generally the product of collaborations with professional performing ensembles in the Boston area, and they include works for orchestra, chorus, computer synthesis, solo voice, and various chamber-music combinations.



When I wrote *Ensemble*, I was concerned with composing vivid, dramatic music, music in primary colors and broad, sweeping strokes. It is a work in one movement, with several sharply contrasting sections, and tape entrances generally articulate boundaries between those sections. At the beginning of the piece, pitched material emerges only gradually from unpitched, percussive sounds; toward the end of the piece, a closely woven tapestry of instrumental and electronic timbres provides a backdrop for a dramatic piano solo. Connecting these harmonically static

areas, the middle sections are more directional, developmental, and polyphonic in character. The taped sounds were generated by computer at the MIT Experimental Music Studio using the MUSIC 11 (today known as C-Sound) music synthesis language. I designed the computer "instruments" using additive and subtractive synthesis and frequency modulation, exploring the capacity of these synthesis techniques to mimic "natural" instrumental sounds. Timbral correspondences between live instruments and tape frequently provide the basis for dialogue between the "natural" and "mechanical" elements of the ensemble.

Ensemblance was commissioned by the Boston Musica Viva, as part of a concert in 1982 to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Igor Stravinsky. In homage to him, Stravinsky's famous 'Sacre' chord is prominently cited twice in the score.

—Peter Child



Established in 1969, **The Boston Musica Viva** was the first professional chamber ensemble for 20th-century music in Massachusetts. With rare exceptions, a new work is premiered in each concert, usually a work the music director Richard Pittman requests of an American composer. Concerts feature the seven-musician core ensemble, but this core is often augmented for larger works. In addition, music-theater and multi-media productions sometimes involve collaboration with other organizations, such as theater and dance groups. Under the direction of Mr. Pittman, the Boston Musica Viva has performed over 373 works by 167 composers, including 78 works written for BMV, 79 world premiers, and 42 Boston premiers. In addition to its concerts at home, BMV regularly offers programs throughout New England and New York, featuring works by Massachusetts composers. On four European tours and two special trips to European festivals, the Boston Musica Viva has introduced concert, radio, and television audiences in ten European countries to works by American composers.

The recording of Ensemblance is made possible through the support of the MIT media lab, and the Dean's Office Professional Development Fund, School of Humanities and Social Science, MIT.

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NEUMA: Electro Acoustic Music II

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| 1 | GERALD SHAPIRO • Phoenix
The Electric Phoenix | 13:50 |
| 2 | JONATHAN BERGER • An Island of Tears | 9:18 |
| 3 | JAMES DASHOW • Disclosures
Luca Paccagnella, Cello | 14:46 |
| 4 | JOHN DUESENBERRY • Agitato (Ergo Sum)
(BMI) | 6:10 |
| 5 | PETER CHILD • Ensemblance
The Boston Musica Viva | 11:30 |



Total Playing Time: 56:05

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