



Thea Musgrave



Judith Shatin

Composers **Thea Musgrave** and **Judith Shatin** share a passion for sensuous sonorities. They further share an involvement with technology, in the digital delay system of *Narcissus* and the computer processing of *Kairos*. And they share a deep poetic resonance with eternal themes: the stories of Narcissus and Orfeo, the reference to Gabriel, are pulled together with the notion of *kairos* — a Greek word meaning “most propitious time.” “Kairos” is the counterpart of “kronos”, or chronological, linear time. “Kairos” is the present moment, a mystical, transformed instant, the “now” — a supremely musical definition of time, since music takes place in the continuously changing, magical “now.”

PATRICIA SPENCER,
flute

LINDA HALL,
piano

NARCISSUS
KAIROS

thea musgrave
judith shatin

			new works for flute with digital delay, tape, computer, piano
1	<i>Narcissus</i> , Thea Musgrave for flute with digital delay	15:42	
2	<i>Orfeo I</i> , Thea Musgrave for flute and pre-recorded tape <i>All the music on the pre-recorded tape is played by James Galway, flute</i>	13:01	
3	<i>Gabriel's Wing</i> , Judith Shatin for flute and piano	9:05	
4	<i>Fasting Heart</i> , Judith Shatin for solo flute	10:37	
5	<i>Kairos</i> , Judith Shatin for flute, computer, and effects processing	15:50	
	TOTAL:	65:54	

Thea Musgrave's *Narcissus* was written in 1987 and is scored for solo flute and digital delay, or electronic "echo" system. Part of a project funded with a Consortium Commissioning grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, *Narcissus* was composed for flutists Wendy Rolfe, Harvey Sollberger, Patricia Spencer, and Robert Willoughby.

The ancient yet ever current story of Narcissus and his ill-fated love for his reflection is the basis for the dramatic form of the piece. Providing an intriguing glimpse of the creative process, Thea Musgrave relates that the origin of the idea of using the Narcissus myth came from her choice of the delay system. As she pondered various options (among them flute and tape) the idea of the digital delay sparked another idea: "I suddenly thought of Narcissus, and that the digital delay would in effect take on a kind of dramatic function, and would become the reflection. And of course, as the digital delay is a reflection of the flute, musically, dramatically it would also work. But then the fun was getting the system all hooked up and seeing how that could work through the whole span of the idea, which is literally the Greek myth: Narcissus wanders through the forest, sees the pool, then sees his reflection. The reflection is shimmering in the sunlight, so appears at first to be dancing independently of the gestures that Narcissus makes; then, as this wonderful creature is imitating him very exactly, it seems as if he's mocking. And Narcissus then gets angry, rushes into the pool to grasp it, and is drowned."

The unfolding of the story of Narcissus is paralleled in the piece by the increasing role of the digital delay. For the opening walk through the forest, the delay effect is silent. When Narcissus first sees the pond, in passing, we hear just a ripple of echoed sound. As he alternately approaches, then jumps back, the reflected

sound increases, then disappears. Gaining courage, he comes closer still, sees a beautiful, shimmering creature — we hear even more echoes, overlapping to create a rich, sensuous texture, and we fall in love with the technology just as Narcissus falls in love with his reflection. After gazing in awe and rapture, Narcissus dances playfully, with the sound “reflection” joining him in a bouncing texture of repeated staccato chords. But as Narcissus becomes anxious at the lack of independent response, his new friend can only reflect and expand his anxiety. The chaotic textures build until Narcissus rushes headlong to attack the creature and is drowned — with the delay system using pitch-bends and a watery disintegration of disjunct flute phrases to convey chaos and tragedy. The pool gradually becomes still again, reflecting only the folly of Narcissism and the destructive seeds it sows.



Orfeo I (1975), subtitled “An Improvisation on a Theme,” was commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation Transcription Services for James Galway. The pre-recorded tape consists of flute music, all performed by James Galway. The material is mixed and put through various transformations by Musgrave. The tape was produced by the BBC and re-mastered by Judith Sherman.

Thea Musgrave writes:

Like the story of Narcissus, *Orfeo* is intended as a simple retelling of the famous legend. The flute represents Orfeo; all the other elements and characters in the story are represented by the music on the tape. Orfeo’s journey to the underworld exists only in his imagination. To heighten the effect of this separation of reality and imagination, much of the music of Euridice, the Furies, the Shades, is suggest-

ed by “memory elements” — that is, quotations from the *Orfeo* of Gluck (in particular the haunting *Dance of the Blessed Spirits*). These are woven into the fabric of the music, along with brief references (in the opening and closing) to Stravinsky’s *Orpheus*. The whole work is thus focussed on Orfeo: on his mourning for Euridice and his vain attempts to recover her. In the end he has to resign himself to her loss.



Judith Shatin’s *Gabriel’s Wing* (1989) was commissioned by flutist Julia Bogorad and the Upper Midwest Flute Association. It won the National Flute Association’s Newly Published Music Competition and was presented at the Washington D.C. NFA Convention in 1992.

The shimmering, vibrant sonorities of the work, combined with its rich yet open harmonies, give immediate credence to the uplifting image of the title, which refers to the angel Gabriel. The music features resonant harmonic series that are associated with the music of the spheres as well as soaring melodic lines that embody images of flight. The flute represents Gabriel, the piano the medium through which the angel moves and communicates. Shatin builds her resonances not just from ingenious interweaving of flute tone with singing (used very effectively), or with piano keys silently depressed so as to ring through the next phrase, but also with her choice of harmonies — chords that grab the natural overtones of the piano and tap into its inherent resonance. Shatin’s flute writing is informed by her familiarity with the instrument as a player, leading to her discovery and use of a good number of expressive, idiomatic fingerings for sliding pitches, harmonics and colorful microtonal trills. An especially poignant

slide, into a quarter-tone flat E-flat, is a recurrent gesture in both *Kairos* and *Gabriel's Wing*.



About *Fasting Heart* and *Kairos*, Judith Shatin writes:

Fasting Heart (1987), for solo flute, derives its title from the Taoist discipline "hsin chai." As Professor Kaltenmark explains in his *Lao and Taoism*, this is a technique of purification in which one transcends the act of listening with the heart (or mind) to listen with the breath (or soul). The act of creating music seems to link these aspects; it is a process in which there is a linking of inward journey and outward manifestation. *Fasting Heart* embodies a journey in which the contemplative element is twice interrupted by violent outbursts, before they are subsumed. The timbral world juxtaposes exploration of meditative qualities of breath and voice with explosive outbursts that push at rhythmic, registral and timbral limits. Smaller, filtered pitch groups are aligned with the inward world, and more highly chromatic registral-torn motion with the outward one. The two musics are linked at a background level; their interaction is connected through the large-scale intertwining of structure.



"Kairos" is a Greek word signifying the most propitious moment for a new undertaking, as in Ulysses setting out on his journey. This meaning suggested a compositional journey on several levels: an adventure into a new medium, a shaping of the musical sojourn, and a particular relationship between the flute and the electronic aether. The utterances of the flute take place through the medi-

um of effects processing, which variously amplifies, distorts, contradicts, blurs, enhances, or transparently transmits them. The path that the flute traverses was inspired by that of Ulysses, from the Heraldic opening and calling forth to the journey, through passages of arduous difficulty, tenacious movement, clear sailing, magical dreaming. The choice to limit the sound resources to overt transformations of the flute's own sound can be understood both as an extension and transformation of the flute into a newly emergent instrument and as a comment on, a response to, its original voice.

Kairos (1991) was composed in the Virginia Center for Computer Music at the University of Virginia. It is scored for flute, digital effects processors (a Roland VP70 Voice Processor and a Quadraverb), and a MAC computer running HMSL (Hierarchical Musical Specification Language), with innovative extensions by systems engineer Pete Yadlovsky. The flutist plays into a microphone that connects to the voice processor, Quadraverb, and computer via MIDI. The computer changes the Quadraverb's processing in real time, and controls such parameters as reverberation, EQ, delay, pitch feedback, LFO depth and speed. The computer's "score" (available on disk), is organized into sections which are triggered by the performer at specified points. Within these sections the timing of the transformations is fixed. They can be understood not merely as mechanical transformation, but as the uncontrollable fate to which the flute is subject.

The composition of Kairos was made possible by an award from the Virginia Commission on the Arts. It was created for and is dedicated to Patricia Spencer.



Dramatic Synopses of Narcissus and Orfeo

"And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life . . ."

From Moby Dick by Herman Melville

Synopsis of Narcissus

Narcissus wanders through the forest, observing, enjoying. . . unselfconscious but self-absorbed. He sees a pool of water and then as he approaches notices his reflection in the water. He is intrigued and then jumps back in fright. Once more he approaches. . . it is still there. Narcissus steps away from the pool to consider this phenomenon. Several times he approaches; the figure is always there watching him. In the shimmering sunlight Narcissus seems to see this glorious and attractive being moving in the rippling water. He is dazzled and slowly holds out his arms. To his amazement the figure responds. In awe and wonder Narcissus approaches closer and closer. With a sudden change of mood Narcissus dances happily and playfully . . . the figure echoing him. But then Narcissus begins to question anxiously the lack of any independent response . . . is he being mocked? He gets more and more agitated and finally in a fury he rushes headlong into the water to grapple with the figure. The waves surge up and Narcissus is drowned. There is a distant shimmering vision of Narcissus and his reflection. Then in the setting sun the vision disappears, the forest is empty and the pool lies undisturbed.

Orfeo I – Scenario

1 Orfeo laments.

Orfeo stands alone on the banks of the river Styx and grieves for Euridice. He hears a distant echo of her voice and he listens. Then it disappears. Orfeo in despair pleads with Charon to ferry him across the river so that he may search for her.

2 Orfeo crosses the river Styx.

Charon consents to listen to his plea. The waves of the river begin to ripple and then surge up and part, and Orfeo can cross to the other side.

3 Orfeo calms the Furies.

Orfeo is confronted by the Furies, and eloquently he pleads with them. They gradually quieten as they listen. He is allowed to proceed, but on one condition...that he must not look at Euridice till he has returned to the other side of the river.

4 Orfeo searches amongst the Shades.

Orfeo searches for Euridice amongst the Shades. He hears her approaching...he steps towards her, then turns away and shields his eyes.

5 Orfeo hears Euridice's pleas.

Orfeo hears Euridice pleading with him to turn and look at her...he cannot resist and he turns. Euridice vanishes for ever.

6 Orfeo is attacked by the Bacchantes.

Orfeo is at once attacked violently by the Bacchantes. He makes a last desperate plea, but he finds himself back on the banks of the river Styx, alone and desolate.

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About the Composers

THEA MUSGRAVE (1928-) is an extremely prolific and versatile composer, with a repertory that encompasses opera, ballet, vocal, chamber, instrumental, and orchestral works. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, she has lived in the United States since 1972. Currently she is Distinguished Professor at Queens College, City University of New York.

Musgrave is perhaps best known in the United States for her eight operas, most of which have been produced in America. *Mary, Queen of Scots*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Harriet, the Woman Called Moses* have all been heard in the US in several productions. Her most recent opera *Simón Bolívar* was premiered by the Virginia Opera in January 1995.

Her strong operatic propensity has led to the development of what Musgrave calls "dramatic abstract" form — which brings something of the drama of the theater into the concert hall, even in works with no program. This dramatic quality has made her music accessible to general audiences, and it has been widely performed in both the US and Europe.

Musgrave is also known as a conductor of her own music and has worked with many prestigious organizations: Philadelphia Orchestra, New York City Opera, San Francisco Spring Opera, Scottish Opera, BBC Symphony, Royal Philharmonic

Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Scottish Ballet.

JUDITH SHATIN (1949-) is known equally for her dramatic acoustic compositions and her imaginative use of computer-generated sound. Professor and Chair at the University of Virginia, she is also Director of the Virginia Center for Computer Music. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Douglass College, she holds the MM from The Juilliard School and the PhD from Princeton University. Her music has been widely performed by orchestras and chamber ensembles including the Houston and National Symphonies, as well as Continuum, Da Capo Chamber Players, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Kronos Quartet. Her music reflects an ever-developing sensitivity to the timbral possibilities of particular instruments, be they acoustic or electronic.

Among Ms. Shatin's awards are four Composer Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. Numerous other grants include those from the American Music Center, Meet the Composer, the West Virginia Arts Council and the Virginia Commission for the Arts. (She has held residencies at Bellagio, Brahms Haus, La Cite des Arts, MacDowell, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Yaddo.) A two-year retrospective of her music at Shepherd College, WV, was recently supported by a major grant from the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Arts Partners Program (1992-94). In addition to four residencies focusing on different aspects of her music, her commissioned piece, a folk oratorio called *COAL*, stepped far outside the boundaries of traditional classical music. Scored for chorus, appalachian ensemble, electronic playback and synthesizer, and with

a libretto by the composer, it reflects her travels throughout the West Virginia region, and her efforts to musically touch an entire way of life. The electronic sounds were all created from the processing of sounds she harvested in a coal mine and the libretto reflects her conversations with people from all walks of life.

Beyond her contributions as a composer, Judith Shatin is a strong advocate for her fellow composers. She served from 1989-93 as President of American Women Composers, Inc., was for two terms a board member of the League/ISCM in New York, and currently sits on the Board of the American Composers Alliance. Recorded on CRI, Neuma, Opus 1, and New World Records, her music is published by Arsis Press, American Composers Edition, Lawson Gould Publishers, Plymouth Music and C.F. Peters Corporation.



About the Performers

Recognized as a major force in the performance of new music, **PATRICIA SPENCER** has received enthusiastic acclaim for her recitals and recordings. Programs often feature selections from an exciting repertoire of pieces written for her, including the title works of the present disc. As a soloist and as flutist with the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players, she has premiered well over 100 pieces — working closely with the most distinguished composers of our own time.

Patricia Spencer's New York City recitals have been presented by prominent new music series, such as the League of Composers/International Society for Contemporary Music, the SONIC BOOM Festival and the Washington Square Contemporary Music Series. The National Endowment for the Arts, the Mary Flagler Cary Trust, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music have awarded grants for her solo recordings and commissioning projects. On an earlier solo CD for Neuma Records (450-88), Ms. Spencer (with pianist Linda Hall) offered a colorful and challenging collection of classics and newer works: Boulez' *Sonatine*, Stephen Jaffe's *Three Figures and a Ground*, Elliott Carter's *Scrivo in vento*, George Perle's *Monody I*, plus works by Louise Talma, Shirish Korde, Arthur Kreiger, and Salvatore Martirano.

A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory, where she was a student of Robert Willoughby, Patricia Spencer continued her studies with Marcel Moyse, John Wummer, and Josef Marx. In addition to performing and teaching, she has been active with the National Flute Association as a Board Member and as Chair of

the New Music Advisory Committee. She teaches flute and chamber music at Bard College — where she presents an annual summer seminar on new flute music — and Hofstra University, where she is the director of the New Music Ensemble.

Pianist **LINDA HALL** did her undergraduate studies at the Oberlin Conservatory and the Salzburg Mozarteum. She holds a graduate degree in piano performance from the Juilliard School. Ms. Hall coaches singers and performs with singers and instrumentalists throughout the United States and abroad. She is assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera; in recent seasons she has prepared the casts for Corigliano's *Ghosts of Versailles* and Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*, *Death in Venice*, and *Billy Budd* among others. Linda Hall can be heard in recording with cellist Jascha Silberstein on the Musical Heritage Society label, and with flutist Patricia Spencer on the acclaimed Neuma Records CD featuring works by Boulez, Talma, and Jaffe.

Patricia
Spencer



Photo: Peter Schaaf

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and Pete Yadlovsky

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and Patricia Spencer

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