

8.10 DREAM PROGRAM NOTES

***Thunderwalker* (1999)**

Stacy Garrop (b. 1969)

Thunderwalker is built on two overlapping edifices. The first encompasses the form of each movement: the first movement is a fugue, the second is a ground bass (passacaglia), and the third is a scherzo-trio. The second abstract structure is derived from what the title suggested to me. I see a thunderwalker as a huge god-like figure who lives in the sky and whose footsteps fall loudly among the clouds. If I were a member of a pre-modern earth society and wanted to get the god-like figure's attention, I would go through a ritual cleansing ceremony (movement 1), then invoke him over and over again (movement 2) until I had summoned him (movement 3).

These two structures complement each other: a fugue is a ritual of sorts (it follows a set of procedures, much like what one might do in a cleansing ceremony). Passacaglias, by their very nature, repeat themselves endlessly (like one lost in chanting invocations). This particular passacaglia is interrupted after each repetitive cycle by chaotic, grumbling noises (as if the god is awakening in the skies). The character of a scherzo-trio can range from light and quick to sinister or macabre (I imagine if a god were summoned down to earth, he would appear good to some, sinister to others, and he would move swiftly along the earth's surface).

The entire work was spun from the opening fugue motive. The first movement focuses on developing the fugue materials, particularly a minor 3rd/tritone interval pattern. The second movement takes a nine-note pitch pattern that was introduced in the first movement (the pattern consists of a repeating interval of a minor 2nd, followed by a minor 2nd, then by a major 2nd) and turns it into a nine-chord pattern (each statement of this pattern equals one complete cycle of the passacaglia). Finally, the third movement mutates the nine-note pitch pattern into an eight-note pitch pattern consisting of alternating minor 2nds and major 2nds, which is known as an octatonic scale.

—*Stacy Garrop*

Thunderwalker was premiered on May 3, 2000, at Orchestra Hall in Chicago, IL, by the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, conducted by Cliff Colnot.

Not recorded

***Dreamscapes* (2009)**

Clarice Assad (b. 1978)

Dreamscapes is a musical depiction of what happens during a dream from the moment one falls asleep, until fully awake. Its form is loosely based upon my research on the subject of rapid eye movement (REM) and lucid dreaming. Both give the piece a sectional but solid structure, divided by phases and segments. The human aspect of *Dreamscapes* is that it follows a storyline which I developed by taking notes of my own dreams. While this was a fantastic new experience for me, it also presented quite a few challenges, such as how to organize all of these imageries, abstract thoughts, and sensations into a cohesive piece of music.

Fortunately, the solution presented itself once I realized that most of the time while I dreamt, I was always present, either as myself or as an observer, and my main desire was often to have a pleasant dreaming experience at all costs. However, once deeply into the dream, I would always find myself drifting away from pleasant sensations to whatever else my unconscious suggested, which was for the most part filled with negativity. Not surprisingly, since we are bombarded everyday with bad news: war headlines, economic crisis and harmful thoughts which stay in our subconscious without our awareness. In several occasions I caught myself fighting to go back to nice feelings of contentment but more often than not, I would lose the battle and completely surrender to the power of these suggestions.

This notion of awareness vs. unconsciousness is what motivated me to apply different roles to the instruments within the orchestra. The solo violin represents self-awareness, while the orchestra represents the unconscious mind, providing the scenario changes throughout the piece. *Dreamscapes* begins with a series of colorful effects that symbolize the moments prior to falling asleep, when the dreamer is still conscious enough to have power over their own thoughts - then, a slow theme is introduced, symbolizing the dream which the self wishes to have. However, the theme is gradually dispersed as the dreamer goes deeper into sleep, losing consciousness and power. After the first REM has been fully completed the dreamer has again the power to take control over their own dream and eventually is able to fulfill that desire. This happens with the recurrence of the slow theme once again, but this time a new 'individual' is introduced into the dream (represented by a solo cello melodic line). The solo cello and violin then have a passionate encounter which is lost abruptly as the unconscious mind takes over yet again. This time struggle between the self and unconscious occurs in a fierce manner, eventually leading to a sequence of horrific events, similar to what one experiences during a nightmare.

Dreamscapes relies highly on visual imagery as it draws from emotional content which is rich in contrasting ideas
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and recurring themes that appear in abrupt or subtle forms. The most important notion to keep in mind is that the self represents peacefulness, harmony and beauty while the unconscious is always forcing negative scenarios.

—Clarice Assad

Dreamscapes was commissioned by the New Century Chamber Orchestra and was premiered on May 14, 2009, at First Congregational Church in Berkeley, CA, with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, music director and soloist.

Recommended Recording:

From A to Z: 21st Century Concertos. New Century Chamber Orchestra with music director and soloist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, NSS Music 853376001054.

***Fallingwater* (2013)**

Michael Daugherty (b. 1954)

This 22-minute concerto is a musical tribute to the visionary American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). The inspiration to compose my second violin concerto came to me when I visited Taliesin, the 600-acre estate that Wright began to build in 1911, nestled into the rolling hills of Wisconsin. For over 40 years, Taliesin was his primary residence, studio, sanctuary, farm, school of architecture, and artistic statement to the world. In the main living hall, his third wife organized soirees for family, apprentices and renowned guests. As I stood in the center of this magnificent space, I noticed a large circular music stand made of wood, designed by Wright himself, with four sides for use by string quartets. I began to hear a composition for strings in four movements, as an emotional, spiritual, and musical exploration of Wright's aesthetic of "organic architecture."

Inspired by four of Frank Lloyd Wright's most admired buildings—Taliesin, Fallingwater, Unity Temple and the Guggenheim Museum—I explore various dimensions of the string orchestra in each movement of *Fallingwater*:

The first movement, *Night Rain*, is a nocturne that evokes the natural beauty of Wright's beloved Taliesin (Welsh for "shining brow"). The plucking of strings, reverberating like drops of water falling softly at night, gradually transforms into a soaring lyrical theme first uttered by the solo violin. Harkening back to Wright's Welsh ancestry, this theme grows organically and contrapuntally into a field of tonal cluster chords, played by the entire string ensemble.

On the Level, the second movement, is a scherzo inspired by Wright's fanciful masterpiece, Fallingwater. Designed for the Kaufmann family and built between 1936 and 1939, this famous house is dramatically positioned over

a waterfall in rural Pennsylvania. For this movement, I construct musical motives in rising and falling lines, creating multiple layers in various canons and tempos, like the daring cantilevers of Wright's architectural structure.

The third movement, *Prairie Psalm*, is my musical meditation on the Unity Temple in Chicago, completed in 1909 when Wright was founding the Prairie School of architectural design. His architecture sought to unite people, buildings and nature in spatial and spiritual harmony. "I believe in God, only I spell it Nature," he wrote. In this movement, I compose a space for reflection and repose through gradual development of meditative melody and heavenly harmonies. I also reflect on a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson, often quoted by Wright: "Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house, a world; and beyond its world, a heaven."

Ahead of the Curve, the fourth movement, is inspired by the Guggenheim Museum, which was designed by Wright as his last masterpiece. Opening to great acclaim in New York in 1959, six months after his death, this virtuosic building was a dramatic finale to a long life of success, scandal, exile, tragedy, and perseverance. Wright struggled against his critics of the Guggenheim Museum, many of whom considered him out of step with their "modernist" aesthetic. But Wright proved to be ahead of the curve, reconfiguring space to bring art and people together in new ways. In composing the fourth movement, I recreate the feeling of walking through the spiraling design of the museum, with the solo violin always one step ahead of the ensemble. While the violin plays in harmony with the strings in the previous three movements, in the finale I reconfigure the acoustic space and create a virtuosic struggle between the soloist and the string orchestra. Like the Guggenheim Museum and the city surrounding it, my music is in perpetual motion, ahead of the curve.

—Michael Daugherty

Fallingwater was commissioned by the New Century Chamber Orchestra and was premiered on November 20, 2013, at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts in Mountain View, CA, with Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, music director and soloist.

Recommended Recording:

From A to Z: 21st Century Concertos. New Century Chamber Orchestra with music director and soloist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, NSS Music 853376001054.

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8.10 DREAM PROGRAM NOTES

Three Songs without Words ***(Drei Gesänge ohne Worte)*** **(2008/09)**

Detlev Glanert (b. 1960)

[U.S. Premiere]

The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which Mendelssohn conducted for almost a dozen years in the latter part of his life, chose to mark his bicentenary by commissioning a new work from Detlev Glanert, one of the most distinguished among present-day German composers. Glanert duly acknowledged the occasion in the title of his work, and took seriously the notion of song being shaped by purely musical forces — by the push and pull of local harmony, and by the larger requirements of form — independently of words. That, however, is far as the homage goes. Glanert writes for a large orchestra, and makes no attempt at stylistic reference to the early nineteenth century. The mirages that swim in his score's richly evocative outer movements belong, rather, to later times: Mahler, Berg, Bartók and early Stravinsky, perhaps, to which the vivid Latin American centrepiece offers a complete contrast.

Moreover, where Mendelssohn's songs without words, being for piano, often suggest arrangements of lieder with the voice part taken by the pianist's right hand, Glanert's have no obvious vocal prototype. His work's melodic phrases may often possess a singing quality, but they are indissolubly associated with the instruments that sing them in this ravishingly scored work. That may make the absence of words, now lost beyond recall, more poignant. And there is another absence, in that a melody rarely finds its end. Instead it will hang open, often to be replaced by another melody that is already moving forward, a different instrument's song.

The first movement is introduced by a solitary viola, cued by percussion and moving from gestures of lament to upward swirls that are imitated by the full orchestra before the main, songful part of the seven-minute movement begins. Beautiful melodies are brought forward and reconsidered by woodwind soloists, and the tempo slackens a little for a conversation between clarinet and violas. Eventually the cor anglais seems to find a definitive shape for the melodic signature that has been winding through the music, at which point the noisy swirls come back briefly, and the solo viola. Then, in a passage of considerable passion, the full strings take over the thread, leading to an evaporation from which the viola emerges again to close the movement.

Next comes what is unashamedly a dance song, playing for about five minutes and locked almost throughout to the same rhythmic pattern moving through changing melodic shapes and orchestral colourings. Song now has to struggle to free itself from eternal rotation in the driving dance. The carnival

is only briefly interrupted for a sumptuously rising song from divided strings; then it resumes as before, but now to reach a violent climax followed by a dissolve.

As long as these first two movements put together, the finale starts with a kind of deflation that one might think should come later in a big adagio, and indeed, as this movement continues so it goes on bringing forward elements of Romantic rhetoric in a new continuity, events coming as if too soon, or not having the consequences expected, or being immediately repeated. Out of the initial collapse arrives the principal viola again, now with a slowly lifting motif that will provide the movement's main idea, taken up by different groups in different ways. After a few minutes the music, confined to the strings, gradually thins down almost to nothing, and the violas — now all of them — reprise the lifting motif to open a second phase. Signals from the first reappear, but now within a watery musical environment, and when the music thins down this time, it does so to leave two solo violins in the extremest high register, a song going on far beyond the limits of human voices. The quiet close comes soon after.

—Paul Griffiths

Three Songs Without Words was commissioned by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and was premiered on August 21, 2009, at the Großer Saal of the Leipzig Gewandhaus, conducted by Markus Stenz.

Not recorded