

## Disclaimer

The persons performing in this concert are living or dead, and any resemblance to fictitious characters is purely coincidental.

## Tonight's Cafeteria

With its twelfth concert, The Composers' Cafeteria has ceased to be a fledgling neo-legal new music group and has become a phenomenon worthy of study. (Hence we return to a school setting.) Our status as phenomena has brought in its wake theoretical structure. After extensive research (including but not limited to *Consumer Reports* and astrological projections), we uncovered the truth about ourselves. The forces which enable molecular motion to occur have elevated our Cafeteria onto a non-sexist, all-embracing proverbial pedestal, from which we observe **Beethoven's skull from above**. Like Siva's drum, the vibrations from a) the skull, b) our swift elevation, c) all other molecules, and d) the aforementioned drum (conspicuously absent in this evening's Indian ensemble) have set up an epiphenomenon which could eventually result in the dance of destruction: the Epicenter Phenomenon. (This is what Husserl meant. We're sure of it. Kind of.) In any case, the only thing which can prevent this dread event is continued — nay, desperate — creativity. And we cannot do it alone. You, too, must continue to think creatively, because that's what keeps the forces of destruction guessing. (Who knows? Destruction might even end up hiding under a Bosh.)

— Jennifer Rycenga Plonsey

## Program Notes

**Velvet Doughnut** is a collaborative effort of sorts. The four movements experiment with different timbres and textures of the guitar and oboes—both acoustic and amplified. The “Desudation Loop” is a live plus live tape piece in real time with our recording and playback technician, Ward Spangler, having an active and creative role.

— Randy Porter

In the opera *Madame Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini, the character Butterfly goes through moments of intense introspection over her situation. Whatever she chooses for herself, she is triumphant simply because it is her will, and this is, in a sense, positive. It has been said that if you go to Japan you might be surprised that people have a very hard time saying “no,” even if you want something they don't have in a store, for instance, as it is considered rude and ungracious, a taboo. (This is how we get the song *Yes, we have no bananas*). *Soliloquy* and *fugu* are moments which I treasure in that they represent to me my freedom to think for myself and make my own choices (in this country you either have to have ‘permissive’ parents or just be old enough to know you can). The *fugu* itself is a distant member of the fugue family and any recognizable similarities are an homage to J. S. Bach. The material of the *fugu* is derived from the *Soliloquy* and from a feeling I had after playing english horn in *Madame Butterfly* early this month.

Kathy Geisler is currently a happy freelance oboe player who has traveled over 6000 miles already in 1988 to bring culture to the outskirts of the bay area and to her own life experience through the people out there. Kathy has a Master of Music degree (to flaunt if she chooses) from the Juilliard School in New York City where she herself originated. She is currently engaged in a project for the future of music and music audiences called The Visible Symphony.

— Kathy Geisler

## Canonical Transformations

In a sense, a canon has to be the cheapest possible way to generate counterpoint. After all, there's only a single line to write. All the players then play the same music, just offset from each other by some fixed interval of time. But in spite of the economy of composition, the music can still become complicated as the line interacts with itself in different ways. The rules of the game can be simple, but the result may not be. In this way a canon can become a paradigm for how a simple idea can give rise to something very complex.

Traditionally, much of the potential for complexity (to say nothing of *chaos*) in a canon has been avoided. A typical “academic” canon is planned so that the melodic and harmonic flows fit with each other in a “logical” way. The first movement of *Canonical Transformations* is this kind of canon. The “transformation” happens in the second movement, where all the careful planning is abandoned and the canon turns into a game of follow-the-leader in which the players dash through a series of melodic fragments at breakneck speed.<sup>1</sup>

Given this, the piece really should have been called *Canonic Transformations*, except that there is another idea involved. There is something called a “canonical transformation” that is used as a tool in mathematical physics. It works like this: Suppose you are trying to analyze the motion of some mechanical system. You can always invent a description in terms of intuitively obvious quantities (say, position and velocity), but the equations of motion may be too hard to solve. A canonical transformation is a mathematical trick by which you can switch to a new description where you are no longer working with intuitive quantities but where solving for the motion is trivially easy. The idea itself is complicated, but the result is to make the problem tractable. The canonical transformation then becomes a paradigm for how a complex idea can suddenly reveal itself to be simple.

This *combined* notion of simplicity breeding complexity which (in becoming still more complex) breeds simplicity is what we will (probably) be thinking about while playing the piece.

— Tom Statler

**[({Set} {Points} (Universe))]** is a three-movement work composed in 1988 specifically for these performers. It is a logical parsing of a future-times Diotima figure — the original Diotima being Socrates’ teacher, legendary for her dry wit and practical mysticism. Within the distinctions of this presentation, we encounter intellectual contemplation (with its resultant energy), intuitive thought (which results in a journey of contraction), and whimsical constructions (built on scales — “our only ragas” – *DJP*). Minor thirds are prominent throughout (“again?” – *DJP*), and there is a tonal center on A (homage to Robert Schumann).

Logical distinctions are, of course, temporary, not final. The movements are as interrelated as the words of the title, or aspects of a person’s character. And like these two analogous examples, there exist both logical moments and the logics of certain moments. I doubt any of this helps, but it’s not all as pretentious as it sounds.

The piece is dedicated, with great affection and respect, to Tom Statler — a founding Cafeterian, meticulous composer, excellent clarinetist, and inveterate star-theory gazer.

— Jennifer Rycenga Plonsey

**Dan the Man** was written to commemorate Dan and Jenny Plonsey’s recent trip to India, and is a sort of finale to the trio of imaginary oratorios I’ve written for The Composers’ Cafeteria in the past year. They all have in common the mixture of old, new and recycled material by myself and other composers, as well as some folk music. The “plots” of these pieces consist of some kind of psychological transformation, so that a kind of sequential signature is used wherein a series of events occurs without transitions to more accurately reflect the random-access state of mind that someone going on that kind of journey would be in.

The music you will sing tonight is published in the “Sacred Harp”; a collection of shape-note hymns established in the early 19th century and based on a long-standing oral tradition. These songs are still being sung and composed by Alabama Baptists as part of an unbroken tradition lasting since the 17th century. The collection is still revised every ten years or so, to accomodate new hymns. You can substitute “Dan” for “Christ” if you like when you’re singing.

You will also hear a song at the end that I didn’t write, as well as quotations from Tom Statler, Dan Plonsey, and classical Indian music. Much of the music tonight will be improvised, and I have to thank the performers for being such good spontaneous collaborators. I also have to thank Emily Martindale for the beautiful sculpture (that Dan stands in).

— James Jacobs

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<sup>1</sup> We hope to avoid actual physical injury to the performers, but audience members are advised to watch for small bits of flying debris such as bridges and soundposts.