

music we'd

In 1993 I moved to Helsinki to study at the Sibelius Academy, with no inkling that I would spend the next ten years of my life in Finland. For me, as for most non-Finns, and even many native Finns, Finnish music meant Sibelius. But I soon learned that the melancholic, sentimental Finnish tango is a genre very close to the nation's soul. The first Aki Kaurismäki film I saw, *Tulitikkutehtaan tyttö* (The Match Factory Girl) — the title loses its splendid alliteration in English — featured Reijo Taipale singing the quintessential tango, *Satumaa* (Enchanted Land). This ubiquitous tune came to represent Finland in music for me as much as the other melody used in my re-arrangement, which I hope needs no introduction. In my mind I can still hear a distant echo of *Satumaa* wheezing out of a battered accordion, whose bellows I knew were lined with squashed mosquitos, as I rowed a small boat across a tree-lined lake in the perpetual twilight of an endless midsummer evening. (HR)

like

Oooh! is a fun little song which Henri Växby and I wrote a couple of years ago for our avant pop band French For Cartridge. Its odd time signatures and cut-up style have had critics describe it as sounding like 'Mary Poppins on an acid trip'. As I associate piano duets with good times, playing either with pianist friends or family members, I naturally chose to arrange a "piece" which I thought would be fun to play for this occasion. I hope you will enjoy it too. (C.K)

to

I found this Phrygian melody in a book about modal counterpoint which I am currently working through. In this arrangement the 43-note melody is played twice. (JL)

hear

Michael Parsons

Tom Johnson
Symmetries
(1990)

Nos. 6, 12, 2, 5, 8, 10, 22, 23,
25, 26, 27, 35, 49, 43

Hilary Robinson

Hilary Robinson
Satumaa
(2012)

Mark Knoop

Christian Wolff
Duet I
(1962)

Philip Thomas

Catherine Kontz
Oooh!
(2012)

Catherine Kontz

Kunsu Shim
ZU-SAMMEN
(2011)

Kerry Yong

John Lely
Arrangement
(2012)

Claudia Molitor

Laurence Crane
Piano Duets
(1990-91)

Michael Parsons

Symmetry has generally been devalued in the 20th century arts. Asymmetry has seemed more free, more open, less predictable, and more modern, and the many forms of expressionism have been particularly opposed to symmetrical structures. Still, the sense of equilibrium has a strong appeal, and I see no reason to avoid it in my own work.

I had been thinking a lot about all this around 1980, when Stephen Dydo gave me permission to use his music typewriter. These machines enable someone like myself to type all the standard musical symbols with machine accuracy, just as easily as concrete poets are able to make visual arrangements of words and letters. I found the music typewriter an ideal medium for exploring logical geometrical forms and patterns, and in a few months I accumulated over 50 drawings that I called "symmetries". Soon afterward, the desire to actually play and hear these curious structures induced me to write some of them out for piano four hands, and I began to appreciate the literal correlation between the visual images of the drawings and the aural images of the realizations. (TJ)

wednesday
4th july 2012
7.30pm

Duet I introduces a new cueing procedure: whereas in Duo II cueing is used to determine the order in which sections are played, and in For Pianist which of several alternative paths is to be followed, here cues are given for precise note-to-note co-ordinations, including attacks and releases of individual sounds. The score consists of two pages, each with a number of separate sections which can be played in any order; sections may be repeated or omitted. Various kinds of interactions between the two players are specified. All timings are either free or dependent on coordinations. This requires very attentive listening; continuity from moment to moment depends on awareness of the quality and resonance of each sound. (Michael Parsons, from the liner notes to Matchless Recordings MRCD51)

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ZU-SAMMEN consists of 61 different short and sharp cluster attacks that follow each other at more or less regular intervals. the objective is to capture the moment when the sound matter seems to disintegrate, in order to facilitate a 'listen-gazing' into the heart of the massed, almost noise-like sound. (KS)

£9
(£6)

Piano Duet no.1 (1990)
Piano Duet no.2 (1991)
Piano Duet no.3 (1991)
Piano Duet no.4 'Sweep and Mop Furlongs' (1991)

My piano duets were all written for a duo that I had with composer Graham Fitkin in the early 1990s. The pieces were written separately for various concerts that we did at the old British Music Information Centre at Stratford Place in London. The complete set was premiered there on 17 December 1992, our last concert. Total duration is around 15 minutes. (LC)

Tom Johnson, born in Colorado in 1939, received B.A. and M.Mus. degrees from Yale University, and studied composition privately with Morton Feldman. After 15 years in New York, he moved to Paris, where he has lived since 1983. He is considered a minimalist, since he works with simple forms, limited scales, and generally reduced materials, but he proceeds in a more logical way than most minimalists, often using formulas, permutations, predictable sequences and various mathematical models. www.editions75.com

Michael Parsons has been active as a composer and performer of experimental music since the mid-1960s. As well as rehearsing piano duets he has recently been arranging traditional Rumanian and Macedonian songs for the Finnish vocal ensemble Fiori and trying to find out what the words of these songs are about. "I am very happy to take part in performing these pieces by Tom Johnson and Laurence Crane, which share an objective spirit of detachment and a demonstrative attitude to their material. They provide a refreshing change from the hyperactivity of much 'contemporary' music, inviting us to experience fully the 'presence' of each moment, through concentration on the material of sound itself."

Hilary Robinson studied composition with Kaija Saariaho, Anders Eliasson and Geoff Poole, and piano with George Hadjiniokos, Charles Hopkins and Tuula Hanhinen. Her music has been played at the Huddersfield Festival of Contemporary Music and in the BMIC's Cutting Edge series, and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and Resonance FM, by performers including Jonathan Powell, Noszferatu, Darragh Morgan and Mary Dullea, who will give the premiere of a new piano piece in August 2012. Another arrangement by Hilary, of the Cocteau Twins' song Violaine, has been performed and recorded by the Fidelio Trio. Hilary teaches at a large London adult education college and grows fruit and vegetables in an urban allotment. www.hilaryrobinson.com

Mark Knoop is a pianist and conductor living in London, UK. He studied piano with Stephen McIntyre at the Victorian College of the Arts and in Europe with mentors including Herbert Henck, James Avery and Peter Feuchtwanger. He studied conducting in Melbourne with Robert Rosen and is co-artistic director of the Libra Ensemble. He performs with such groups as Plus-Minus (London/Brussels), Ensemble Exposé (London), Letter Piece Company (London/Brussels), ELISION Ensemble (Brisbane), 175 East (Auckland), musikFabrik (Köln) and Apartment House (London). www.markknoop.com

Christian Wolff was born in 1934 in Nice, France, but has lived mostly in the U.S. since 1941. He studied piano with Grete Sultan and, briefly, composition with John Cage. Though mostly self-taught as a composer, association with John Cage, Morton Feldman, David Tudor, Earle Brown, Frederic Rzewski and Cornelius Cardew have been important for him. A particular feature of his music has been to allow performers various degrees of freedom and interaction at the actual time of performance. Wolff has also been active as a performer and as an improviser - with, among others, Takehisa Kosugi, Steve Lacey, Keith Rowe, William Winant, Kui Dong, Larry Polansky and the group AMM. His writings on music, up to 1998, are collected in the book *Cues: Writings and Conversations*, published by MusikTexte, Cologne.

Philip Thomas is a pianist based in Sheffield, and is Reader in Music at the University of Huddersfield. His recent performance of Cage's 4'33" was described in the Guardian as being 'smooth' and 'surprisingly brisk'. www.philip-thomas.co.uk

Catherine Kontz (b. 1976 in Luxembourg) is a London-based composer. As part of her PhD in Composition at Goldsmiths College, University of London, she single-handedly produced and directed her mime-opera, MiE, for a set of six sold-out performances at The Space, London in 2006. She has since then worked extensively within the world of contemporary opera as well as writing works for performers such as Monica Germino, Véronique Nosbaum, Sebastian Lexer, Danny Standing, Kate Ryder, Rhodri Davies, Henri Växby, BJ Cole and Ensemble Lucilin. Catherine has been commissioned for new works by Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Rational Rec/London, Chetham's School of Music, Noisewatchers Unlimited, Centre National de L'Audiovisuel/Luxembourg and Banque centrale du Luxembourg. Her music has been performed extensively throughout Europe. She currently works on a new opera commission for Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg to premier in 2013. When she is not composing, Catherine can be seen co-fronting avant-pop band French For Cartridge. Having studied the piano with Michele Ries and John Tilbury, Catherine also regularly performs within the London contemporary music and free improvisation scene, often with her experimental music duo une cartouche. www.catherinekontz.com

Kunsu Shim was born in 1958 in Busan, South Korea, and arrived in Germany in 1985, to study composition with Helmut Lachenmann in Stuttgart. In 1989, Shim moved to Essen to continue his education with Nicolaus A. Huber. It was then that

his style moved in a new direction - not least through an increased interest in new music from the U.S, the visual arts and literature. In 2010 Kunsu Shim was invited to the Borealis Festival in Bergen (Norway) as composer-in-residence, presenting numerous site specific works. In the same year, he organized the festival HörSinne in the Ruhr Area, and published the German-English-Korean art book bild•klang•los together with the Korean artist Kyungwoo Chun and composer Gerhard Stäbler. In 2011, his work *After a hundred years* for soprano and orchestra was premiered at the Essen Philharmonie. For his latest major project he collaborated on Helge Letonja's dance theatre *The Drift*, which has toured numerous European cities since its premiere in April 2012. kunsu-shim.de

when **kerry yong** isn't playing the piano, he also makes covers of modernist classics on small 80s casio keyboards and guitar pedals, and electronic recreations of some of John Cage's prepared piano works. He's also director of music for Grace Church Hackney. "Rule 8: Don't try to create and analyse at the same time. They're different processes." (Sister Mary Corita, Immaculate Heart College Art Department Rules) kerry-yong.blogspot.co.uk

John Lely was born in 1976 and is based in London. He studied at Goldsmiths with Roger Redgate, Dave Smith and John Tilbury, and privately with Michael Parsons. In 2007 he was a resident student at Ostrava New Music Days. In 2012 he was a resident composer at the Bozzini Quartet's Composers' Kitchen in Montréal and Huddersfield. From 2003 to 2008 he taught composition and creative strategies at Goldsmiths, and experimental sound at Chelsea College of Arts, and from 2008 to 2010 was a researcher at Bath Spa University. He is co-author, with James Saunders, of *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation* (Continuum 2012). johnlely.co.uk

Claudia Molitor is a composer and artist, whose work extends from instrumental writing to moving image. www.claudiamolitor.org

Laurence Crane was born in Oxford in 1961 and studied composition with Peter Nelson and Nigel Osborne at Nottingham University. His music is mainly written for the concert hall, although his list of works includes pieces originally written for film, radio, theatre, dance and installation. He lives and works in London.

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