

NEW MUSIC WITH GUITAR

Selected Works from Volumes 1, 2 & 3

David Starobin, Guitar

with Patrick Mason, baritone; Susan Palma, alto flute;
Peter Press, mandolin; Susan Jolles, harp

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|------------|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Changes</i> (1983)
(guitar solo) | Elliott Carter (6:57)
(b. 1908) |
| 2-5 | <i>Sunday Song Set</i> (1984)
(baritone, guitar)
<i>Color and Light</i> (4:29)
<i>Finishing the Hat</i> (2:54)
<i>Lesson #8</i> (2:12)
<i>Putting it Together</i> (3:53) | Stephen Sondheim (13:24)
(b. 1930) |
| 6 | <i>Composition for Guitar</i> (1984)
(guitar solo) | Milton Babbitt (7:00)
(b. 1916) |
| 7-9 | <i>Toward the Sea</i> (1981)
(alto flute, guitar)
<i>The Night</i> (2:53)
<i>Moby Dick</i> (3:24)
<i>Cape Cod</i> (3:31) | Toru Takemitsu (9:54)
(b. 1930) |

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| 10 | <i>Another's Fandango</i> (1981)
(guitar solo) | John Anthony Lennon (6:05)
(b. 1950) |
| 11-13 | <i>Three Lullabies</i> (1980)
(guitar solo)
<i>"Falling . . .</i> (2:20)
<i>As sleep falls</i> (2:08)
<i>In the innocent air."</i> (2:53)
(with Richard Frisch, baritone) | Barbara Kolb (7:29)
(b. 1939) |
| 14 | <i>A Fantasy-Homage to Tomás Luis de Victoria</i> (1974)
(guitar solo) | William K. Bland (8:15)
(b. 1947) |
| 15-17 | <i>Carillon, Récitatif, Masque</i> (1974)
(mandolin, guitar, harp)
<i>Carillon</i> (5:37)
<i>Récitatif</i> (2:16)
<i>Masque</i> (1:34) | Hans Werner Henze (9:34)
(b. 1926) |

Total Time: 69:27

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Notes by William K. Bland

It is clear that the development and creative production of music in nearly all forms has continued to grow during the twentieth century. World-wide communication has encouraged composers and performers to explore and stylistically integrate an ever-widening base of scientific and cultural aesthetics. No style has disproven or permanently replaced another, and abstraction has come to exist comfortably by the side of literal representation and emotional fantasy. The guitar, an instrument 'rediscovered' during this century, has experienced an explosive growth of repertoire especially illustrative of this concurrent diversity.

Elliott Carter: *Changes*

The following note was written by the composer, prior to the first performance:

"*Changes*, for guitar solo, is music of mercurial contrasts of character and mood, unified by its harmonic structure. Various aspects of the basic harmony are brought out in the course of the work, somewhat like the patterns used in ringing changes.

The score was written during the summer of 1983 and is dedicated to David Starobin who commissioned it, and generously gave me advice about the guitar."

The continuous development of musical materials within a unified structural language has been an ongoing concern of Carter's. In 1971, Carter wrote, "Composing consists of dealing with the flow of music rather than with particular instants of sound." In *Changes*, this "flow" from the incisive opening

chords to the sustained ending, occurs within a framework of contrasting short sections. The concluding two sections (linked by bridge material) are marked *scherzando* and *Lento tranquillo* respectively. More lengthily developed, they transform the rapidly "changeable" aspects of the previous sections into an extended climax and tranquil conclusion.

Carter's *Changes* is a dramatic, masterful addition to the guitar's repertoire.

Stephen Sondheim: *Sunday Song Set*

Stephen Sondheim, who studied composition with Milton Babbitt, has concentrated his creative work almost solely in compositions written for the stage.

Sunday in the Park with George (music and lyrics by Sondheim; book by James Lapine), is a semi-autobiographical examination of the creative process itself, portrayed through the vehicle of Georges Seurat's painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. Seurat (1859-91) developed the technique now called "pointillism," where small dots of color rather than brush strokes create a concerted image in the perception of the viewer. Much of Sondheim's score and text is constructed in the same manner—as a flow of points of sound.

The first two songs are from Act 1, set in Seurat's studio and in the park where he is sketching. In *Color and Light*, George is speaking to himself in a stream of consciousness involving the objects and characters in his painting, including his mistress, Dot. Still speaking to himself in *Finishing the Hat*, he rationalizes losing Dot because of his obsession with painting. . . his art remains, and with it, an expression of himself and all parts of his experience.

The third and fourth songs are from Act 2, set in the present. Here, the

great-grandson of Seurat, another George, struggles again with the questions and self-doubts of artistic expression. In *Lesson #8* George visits the Island of La Grand Jatte, now urbanized. His tangible link to the past is a French grammar book, given to his grandmother by her mother, Seurat's mistress Dot. *Putting it Together* takes place at a museum cocktail party after a showing of George's latest sculpture, *Chromolume #7*. The interweaving text is a biting commentary on the necessity for artists to incessantly raise money through grants and commissions, while trying to maintain the integrity of an artistic vision.

The arrangements for baritone and guitar were made by Michael Starobin, the orchestrator of the original Broadway score, with minor revisions added later by Sondheim. Starobin made these arrangements for his brother, David, and Patrick Mason, who gave *Sunday Song Set* its premiere in London.

Milton Babbitt: *Composition for Guitar*

Composed for and dedicated to David Starobin, *Composition for Guitar* was completed in 1984. It continues a series of works initially concerned with twelve-tone structure (*Composition for Orchestra*, 1941) which have now been expanded to include a comprehensive serial inter-structuring of all the definable parameters of composition, particularly utilizing set theory. In *Composition for Guitar* this results in a linear polyphony of pitch, rhythmic, dynamic, timbral, and registral levels, while its ever-transparent surface contains sections of both intensity and tranquility.

For the first performance, Babbitt provided a program note that elucidated

the influences of jazz performance and serial structuring on his work: "If its use of the guitar suggests the instrumental influence of Eddie Lang rather more than that of later practitioners, I suspect—nevertheless—that he would have found the work inscrutable and probably—unmanageable, as David Starobin obviously does not.

The character of this one-movement work manifestly changes at about its midpoint, where there is a reinterpretation of the underlying rhythmic conception, which itself is a reflection of the basic six-part pitch polyphony. . ."

Toru Takemitsu: *Toward the Sea*

Toru Takemitsu's *Toward the Sea* was completed in 1981, and was first performed in Tokyo by Horioshi Koizumi and Norio Satoh. The cycle interweaves a mixture of delicate textures and colors throughout its three movements. Just as the sections of a painter's triptych may share materials and segmented form, the movements of *Toward the Sea* share musical materials and imagery.

Takemitsu has written that composition ". . . gives a proper meaning to the streams of sound which permeate the world."

John Anthony Lennon: *Another's Fandango*

Another's Fandango, by John Anthony Lennon, was written for David Starobin in 1981. An impressionistic evocation of the guitar's traditional role in Spanish music, *Another's Fandango* retains neither the meter nor tempo of the original dance. Instead, Lennon uses syncopated motor-rhythms, shifting tempi, and an expansive harmonic language, to form a rondo-like continuity.

Another's Fandango continues a compositional tradition by integrating ethnic and popular elements into a rhapsodic, classical structure.

Barbara Kolb: *Three Lullabies*

Barbara Kolb's *Three Lullabies* (1980) was written to honor the birth of her godson, Robert Joseph Starobin. Each lullaby is subtitled, quoting an image from Wallace Stevens poem "Anecdote of the Prince of Peacocks":

Falling
as sleep falls
in the innocent air.

In the first lullaby, the extensive use of harmonics, intermitten pauses, and delicate chords creates a tension between subtle movement and suspension. As in many of Kolb's works, this movement is substantially based on an organizing pitch and harmonic structure, in this instance a 12-tone row. However, the musical construction always serves the expressive qualities of the piece. In several areas there is no overt reference to pre-determined pitch construction at all, simply an emotionally expressive line and rhythm. The second lullaby is an inverted passacaglia, consisting of a melodic figure (repeated 4½ times) used as a base around which groups of 32nd notes function as appoggiaturas. As the piece progresses, the melodic tones become gradually elongated, thereby creating a feeling of deepening repose. The last movement contains a humming part for the guitarist, reminiscent of the origin of the lullaby. The vocal line contains all 12 tones, the last introduced being the E natural, with which the vocal part later ends. The accompaniment for guitar is based around the repetition of groups of three chords freely developed. In this recording the humming is performed by Richard Frisch.

William Bland: *A Fantasy-Homage to Victoria*

A Fantasy-Homage to Tomás Luis de Victoria is no. 4 in a set of *Six Pieces for Guitar: 4 Etudes on Characteristic Spanish Subjects, and 2 Songs*; a series of compositions which explore extended techniques and sound possibilities of the guitar.

This homage to the Spanish renaissance composer Victoria (1548-1611) is an etude on tremolando and arpeggiando techniques, with an additional technical feature being an extensive use of quarter-tones. Tremolando is used in this piece to suggest the sustained choral effect of Victoria's work, and specifically one work, *O Vos Omnes* (c.1570), the beginning of which is quoted at the opening of this piece. The rising scalar passages that dominate the second half of the work are a musical reference to the search for ecstasy, so prominent in the Spanish philosophic literature of the 16th century. But these references are only the basis of the fantasy referred to in the title. This fantasy is not developed through musical technique alone, but rather as a painter might try to express an abstracted conception through a particular subject. This work, like the entire set of six pieces, is dedicated to David Starobin.

Hans Werner Henze: *Carillon, Récitatif, Masque*

Hans Werner Henze's *Carillon, Récitatif, Masque* (1974) may come as a surprise to those listeners familiar with his early symphonic work and his later politically oriented works. This trio for mandolin, guitar, and harp contains neither the atonality found in his first five symphonies, nor any propagandizing toward socio-political goals, as in *Das Floss der Medusa* (1968) or *El Cimarron* (1970). There is instead a sense of neo-classical reminiscence, non-political

but still social, in Henze's use of popular rhythms.

The choice of instruments contributes an almost surreal lustre to the polytonal harmonic language used throughout most of the piece. The title of the first movement, *Carillon*, refers to this quality of sound—the carillon is evoked by the similarities of color, and the uninterrupted chromatic range found within these three instruments. *Carillon*, much longer than either of the remaining two movements, contains an extended guitar solo, and ends with a coda-like return of the opening, still unsettled by the multiple bases of its polytonality. *Récitatif* is formally an A-B-A. In the outer sections the guitar states a cantilena-like melody, while mandolin and harp provide a spare accompaniment. In contrast, the *B* section contains a harp solo, punctuated by repeated guitar chords. The return to *A* is an exact repetition of the opening, leading to a final tri-tonal cadence. *Masque* places the three instruments in an equal setting. This brief movement is filled with arpeggios, rhythmic ostinati and fragmentary melodic sequences. The concluding ostinati (again tri-tonal) die away to *pppp*, leaving a feeling of unending continuation—perhaps a final reference to the title.

Producer: David Starobin

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Guitars: Thomas Humphrey and Daniel Friedrich

Harp: Lyon and Healy 23

Mandolin: George Washburn



David Starobin