

## WHO DO I THINK I AM?

- a guy who spent a lot of time playing in rock bands when he was young
- who gave up the glamorous life as a rock musician to become a freestyle skier
- who gave up the glamorous life as a freestyle skier to play the lute and become an early music ensemble director
- who gave up the glamorous life as a lute player and aspiring early music ensemble director to become a “serious” composer
- who today turned forty (2/14/96)
- who is known in the contemporary music community as a composer of chamber and orchestra music that sometimes includes electric guitar
- who is known around Princeton University as a teacher of music composition, theory, and 20th century music.
- whose current music-making activities include: composing at a desk, at the piano, with a guitar, directly to tape, at the computer, for other people, for himself; improvising alone, with friends and students; arranging other people’s music for various ensembles; doing a solo guitar performance “thing;” performing his chamber music that includes guitar; sitting in with bands on campus
- an optimist

## WHAT DO I THINK I AM DOING?

I originally intended **Lost & Found** as part of a piece for cello and orchestra entitled *Banana/Dump Truck*. In composing it I used the guitar to make a mock-up tape. I stopped work on the piece when I became convinced that the music was not right for the rest of *Banana/Dump Truck* and the material was too comfortable in its setting for string orchestra. The piece had no home until I listened again to my guitar mock-up and enjoyed the subtle irony of the guitars playing the fluffy, “encore” music in the second half of the piece.

**Grungy:** no irony here. What other instrument can make that sound? Is there another instrument that makes you feel like you’re on center stage at the state fairgrounds amphitheater, when in reality you’re practicing in front of the mirror in your underwear? ... ah, lost youth.

**Dancetracks** was the result of a collaboration with Paul Lansky. He began with the idea for a piece for tape and improvising guitarist. The tape part sounds like a couple of fabulous percussionists with a background of sustained notes that vary from sparse pedal tones to a fabric of slow counterpoint. I responded to the tape part with a guitar part that defers to, reinforces, accepts, contradicts and ignores the tape. While my approach was improvisational, my compositional instincts

left undeniable footprints on the foreground of the piece. Moreover, the process of “fixing” the piece on a CD is different from a live, improvised performance where, when it is over, all that remains is the tape part. For these reasons, Paul and I agreed that we should share the credit and blame for the result. Not since my rock band days have I collaborated on a composition. I had forgotten how liberating it was; I found it easier to be both earnest and over-the-top when sharing the responsibility with someone I trust.

**Myrtle and Mint** is about storytelling. Fragments of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales have been adapted with the idea of setting up the rhythm and listening context of storytelling/listening, but the real action is found in the guitar part. By the way, the guitar uses a microtonal tuning.

Metaphorically speaking, **Wish it Were** was once a moody ballad; now many features are forgotten and many of the remaining features have become distorted in the memory. Only the mood remains intact.

A **Cairn** is a pile of stones used to mark a gravesite. I wrote the piece as a gift to friends of mine commemorating their loss.

**Steven Mackey** is a composer, guitarist and Professor of Music at Princeton University. He has composed for the Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Kronos Quartet, Fred Sherry, Bill Frisell, Joey Baron, Dawn Upshaw, Marimolin and many other ensembles and soloists. He has performed as a guitarist at venues in the U.S., Europe and Japan as a soloist and with ensembles such as the Kronos Quartet and Marimolin. His other recordings include a CD of his instrumental work on the Newport Classic label entitled “Indigenous Instruments”; *Physical Property* performed by the Kronos Quartet on their Nonesuch CD “Short Stories”; and *Feels So Baaad* recorded by Marimolin on their Catalyst/BMG disc “Combo Platter.”

In addition to being the best man at Steve Mackey’s wedding, **Paul Lansky** is a prominent international figure in computer music and a Professor of Music at Princeton University. His music is readily available on CD including three recent releases on Bridge entitled *More Than Idle Chatter* (BRIDGE 9050) *Homebrew* (BRIDGE 9035) and *Folk Images* (BRIDGE 9060).

The equipment used in the performances on this recording include: *Gibson Les Paul*, *Fender Stratocaster*, *Chris Carrington* nylon-string, *Zoom* effects processor, *Jam Man* delay/sample/loop, Joey Baron’s 16-second delay, E-bow, bottleneck, Nancy’s stuff (tambourine, maracas, claves and triangle), community property wine glasses and Jim Randall’s rainstick. The performances were recorded direct to a *Tascam DA88*, mixed in an analog studio, and mastered at Princeton University using *Sound Designer*.



### Credits

Very, very special thanks to **Nancy Zeltsman** who dropped whatever she was doing to give me ruthlessly honest reactions to what I was doing. I could not have done this without her.

Very special thanks to **Jim Moses** who led me through the whole process of recording, mixing and mastering with a sure hand. I never had more fun than I had making this disc, partly because Jim made it possible for me to focus on the music.

Special thanks for help in a variety of ways, all above and beyond the call of duty, to **Paul Lansky, Jim Allington, Elaine Mackey, Mochi and James Fei.**

Thanks to **The Committee for Research in the Humanities and Music Department at Princeton University** for financial support.

Thanks to **Donahue Plumbing** in Cambridge, MA for the use of their office for the cover photo.

Thanks to **Becky Starobin** at Bridge Records for coordinating this project and nudging me just the right amount.



**Produced by Steve Mackey**  
with Nancy Zeltsman  
and on *Dancetracks* with Paul Lansky  
**Engineered by Jim Moses**  
Mixed by Steven Mackey  
and Jim Moses at Graphic Sound Studio  
**Mastered by Jim Moses**  
**Photos by Susan Wilson**  
**Typography by Robert Starobin**  
**Executive Producers: Becky and David**  
Starobin

**Bridge Records, Inc.**  
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*Electric Guitar Music by*

# Steve Mackey

**1** **LOST and FOUND** (5:00)  
*4 guitars, classical and electric*

**2** **GRUNGY** (7:38)  
*solo electric guitar*

**3** **DANCETRACKS** (18:12)  
*electric guitar and computer-generated tape*

**4** **MYRTLE and MINT** (18:17)  
*electric guitarist / storyteller*

**5** **WISH IT WERE** (6:15)  
*solo classical guitar*  
*(with 3 electric guitars at the very end)*

**6** **CAIRN** (6:13)  
*solo electric guitar*

Total Time: (61:35)

All performances are by Steve Mackey except the first wine glass clank in *Myrtle and Mint* which is by Nancy Zeitsman.

All works composed by Steven Mackey except *Dancetracks* which is composed by Paul Lansky and Steven Mackey.

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