

# Music of Richard Festinger

## Performed by New Millennium Ensemble

Tara Helen O'Connor, flute; Marianne Gythfeldt and Alan R. Kay, clarinet;  
Sunghae Anna Lim, violin; Gregory Hesselink, cello;  
Margaret Kampmeier, piano; John Ferrari, percussion.

**1 Peripeteia** (1999) (10:15)

(clarinet, violin and cello)

Alan R. Kay, clarinet

Sunghae Anna Lim, violin

Gregory Hesselink, cello

**2 Variations for Piano** (1988) (12:22)

Margaret Kampmeier, piano

**Triptych** (1979) (14:36)

(unaccompanied flute)

**3 I. Espressivo e un poco liberamente** (4:58)

**4 II. Animato assai** (4:03)

**5 III. Lento** (5:22)

Tara Helen O'Connor, flute

**6 Construction en metal et bois** (2001) (12:58)

(piano and percussion)

Margaret Kampmeier, piano

John Ferrari, percussion

**After Blue** (1998) (17:08)

(flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet,  
violin, cello, piano and percussion)

**7 I. Allegro con brio** (5:32)

**8 II. Adagio fantastico** (7:44)

**9 III. Allegro capriccioso** (3:37)

Tara Helen O'Connor, flute and piccolo

Marianne Gythfeldt, clarinet and bass clarinet

Sunghae Anna Lim, violin

Gregory Hesselink, cello

Margaret Kampmeier, piano

John Ferrari, percussion

*Notes by the composer*

It has been my great pleasure to have had numerous opportunities, over a period of many years, to work with the New Millennium Ensemble. My introduction to these extraordinary artists came during the 1994 June in Buffalo Festival, where they performed my sextet, *A Serenade for Six*. Since that time, New Millennium has performed many of my works, including the three ensemble pieces recorded here. This disk, then, represents the most recent fruit of a long and inspiring collaboration.

Interestingly, the music that appears here was composed over a span of more than two decades, from the solo flute piece *Triptych*, written in 1979 during my graduate student days, to the 2001 piano-percussion duo *Construction en metal et bois*, both pieces, coincidentally, written during extended stays in Paris. While there was no conscious intent on the part of myself or the ensemble to survey such a broad time span of compositional activity, the gathering of music represented here is fascinating to me in what it reveals of my own evolution as a composer.

When I arrived in Paris in the Autumn of 1978 on a traveling fellowship from the University of California, the only performer I knew there was a young American, Leslie Lind, who was studying the flute, so I set about writing her a piece. I had rented a small studio apartment not far from the Porte St.-Denis, but it was too small for a piano, so at first I had no

good place to work. I discovered three or four places in the city where pianos were available for a few francs an hour, if no one else was already using them. The places I frequented the most were the Église Américain on the Quai d'Orsay, and a small building near Montparnasse that was shared by two or three American colleges as a center for their overseas programs. I could never predict whether, after trekking all the way across town, I would even be able to use one of these instruments, and I think I must have developed quite a reputation in these places, which I inhabited at any hour I could, trying out the newest phrases of Leslie's piece. After three months I let a larger apartment near Cardinale Le-moine, rented a piano, and was finally able to really get down to work. The first performance of *Triptych* took place the following May at the old Centre Américain on the Boulevard Raspail.

My *Piano Variations* is a set of eight variations on an original theme, though it will be clear from the outset that it is not a theme in the Mozartean or Beethovenian sense, in either construction or treatment. The theme consists of a moderately long, two-part rounded form, and ends with three sets of reiterated chords which are used at times as cadential material, and at other times to make a transition, by preparing or anticipating the mood or texture of the succeeding variation. The fourth variation - in a poignant and contemplative mood, played *una corda* - provides a centerpiece, the other variations deployed symmetrically around it, with lighter, dance-like variations preceding, and more turbulent ones follow-

ing. The turbulence reaches a climactic moment, leading to a final, incomplete variation reminiscent of the opening. Considered another way, the variations group themselves together harmonically and rhetorically into a sonata-like structure: the theme and first variation are expository in meaning and character; variations 2, 3 and 4 are developmental; and variation 5 returns to the original tonal area dominated by D and Ab, with a richly figured variation on the opening theme. The first performance of the *Piano Variations* took place October 13, 1988, at the University of California in Davis.

The sextet *After Blue* was commissioned by the Paul Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University for the New Millennium Ensemble, who had previously produced a recording and many wonderful performances of my earlier sextet, *A Serenade for Six*. This commission gave me an opportunity to create a companion piece to the serenade, with all the consummate skill and vibrant musicality of New Millennium at the heart of it. My conception was based on the use of the diverse palette of the ensemble's instrumental resources to create a kaleidoscopic panorama of strongly etched lines of constantly shifting color. The instruments are combined and recombined in myriad ways, sometimes featuring one instrument as a protagonist, other times tossing melodic fragments back and forth between instruments in a rapid and spirited interplay. The music falls into three large sections. The thematically related outer sections, marked respectively *allegro con brio* and *allegro capriccioso*, are

bright and extroverted, though not without moments of lyricism. In the centerpiece, marked *adagio fantastico*, the mood and use of instrumental color become more darkly dramatic and atmospheric. New Millennium presented the premiere performance of *After Blue* on December 1, 1999, at Merkin Hall in New York City.

*Peripeteia* grew out of my appreciation of the beautiful ways in which the sound color of the clarinet blends so harmoniously with that of string instruments, here violin and cello. At times, as in the opening gestures of the piece, the strings provide an environment, or landscape, in which an active clarinet takes on the role of a protagonist. A little further on, the cello is highlighted, the clarinet and violin providing an accompaniment mostly in parallel fourths. Sometimes the three instruments act almost as a single entity, combining their colors through additive processes. At other times, each takes on its own independent role in a contrapuntal colloquy. Interesting sonorities emerge on those occasions when the clarinet functions as the ensemble's bass. *Peripeteia's* musical impulses emanate from the opening idea, in which the clarinet, in a floridly melismatic outburst, diverges from, and then re-converges on the initial note sustained by the cello. From that point of departure, the music moves continually through scenarios suggesting divergence and re-convergence, sudden turns of events, and unexpected reversals. New Millennium gave the premiere performance of *Peripeteia* on May 11, 2002, at Merkin Hall in New York City.

*Construction en metal et bois* is a virtuosic duo for piano and mixed percussion. The music unfolds in several large sections. At the outset, the two performers respond to each other in a rapid-fire game of increasingly agitated action and reaction, until they come together in a fortissimo passage featuring motoric percussion accompanying dense and clangorous chords in the piano. The quiet, sparse music which follows makes an arc of surprising breadth, whereupon the music begins to gradually regenerate its previous energetic character, albeit in a rather different mood. But the resemblance is short-lived, interrupted by a jazzy, dancing duet for piano and vibraphone, which finally comes around to a return of the music of the opening, and leads directly into the work's culminating climax. Commissioned by Thierry Miroglio and Ancuza Aprodu, *Construction en metal et bois* received its premiere performance at the University of Maryland on October 18, 2001, and was featured at the 2002 Festival Antidogma Musica at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Torino, Italy. The first performance by New Millennium took place February 10, 2007, at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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Composer **Richard Festinger** (b. 1948) has received international attention and acclaim for the elegance and expressive power of his many compositions. Founder of the San Francisco based contemporary music ensemble Earplay, and Professor of Music Composition at San Francisco

State University, Richard Festinger's career as a composer spans nearly three decades. His music is published by C.F. Peters, and his works have previously been recorded for the Centaur, CRI and CRS labels. He has received awards from the Jerome Foundation, the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University, the Koussevitzky Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Barlow Foundation, the Mary Flagler Cary Trust, the Pew Charitable Trust, the American Composers Forum, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His works have been commissioned for the New York New Music Ensemble, the Alexander String Quartet, City Winds, the Laurel Trio, Earplay, the Left Coast Ensemble, the Miroglio-Aprodu Duo, the Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, the Redwood Symphony Orchestra, the Emyrean Ensemble, the Group for Contemporary Music, Network for New Music, Stony Brook University, the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, Volti, the Selby Gallery at the Ringling School of Design, and New Millennium Ensemble. His music has also been performed by groups such as Speculum Musicae, Phantom Arts, Composers Inc., the Sun String Quartet, the Berkeley and Riverside Symphonies, sopranos Jane Manning, Karol Bennett, and Amy Burton, the Orchestra da Camera Italiana G.F. Ghedini, the Ensemble Italiano per la Musica Contemporanea, Ensemble Anti-Dogma, the Seoul, Korea Festival of Electro-Acoustic Music, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Mr. Festinger studied composition at the University of California in Berkeley with Andrew Imbrie. Before turning to composing, he led his own groups as a jazz performer.



**New Millennium Ensemble**

Left to Right: Anna Lim, Tara O'Connor, Alan Kay, Gregory Hesselink, Margaret Kampmeier, John Ferrari, Richard Festinger

**New Millennium Ensemble** was founded in 1990 and quickly established itself as one of New York's finest young ensembles. The members of the ensemble are deeply committed to the promotion of new American music, accomplishing their goals through commissioning, performing and recording. In 1995 they were awarded the prestigious Walter W. Naumburg Chamber Music Award, and soon thereafter they received the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming.

New Millennium Ensemble has appeared at Merkin Hall, Miller Theatre, the Ethical Culture Society, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, on WNYC's Around New York, and at Harvard, Columbia and Princeton Universities. Past performances include appearances at the Radio León Festival in Monterrey, Mexico, Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, California, Sonic Boom Festival in New York, a residency and concert with the Pittsburgh Chamber Music Society, and the Naumburg Award Recital at Alice Tully Hall. In addition, the group has presented numerous children's concerts under the auspices of The Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, Merkin Hall and the Harlem School for the Arts. Highlights of recent seasons include performances at the Eastman School of Music, on the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's "Double Exposure" series and at the American Academy in Rome.

This CD is the result of a long-standing collaboration between New Millennium Ensemble and Mr. Festinger. The ensemble members met Mr. Festinger at the June in Buffalo Festival in 1994, and since that time have performed many of his works. Through the years he has been a welcome guest at many of our rehearsals and performances. We are delighted to present this new CD and are grateful to the Argosy Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco State University and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University for their support of the project.

Grammy nominated flutist **Tara Helen O'Connor** performs regularly with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the virtuoso woodwind quintet Windscape, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Spoleto Festival USA, Chamber Music Northwest, and Music from Angel Fire. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant, she has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, EMI Classics, Koch, and Bridge Records. Recent performances included collaborations with Peter Serkin, Dawn Upshaw, and the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. She has appeared on "Live from Lincoln Center" and A&E's "Breakfast with the Arts." Ms. O'Connor is professor of flute and head of the wind department at Purchase College Conservatory of Music, and is on the faculty of the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

Clarinetist **Marianne Gythfeldt** has distinguished herself in chamber music, orchestral and contemporary music performance on the international stage. In addition to her work as clarinetist of New Millennium Ensemble from 1992 to 2005, she plays currently with Zephyros Winds, Absolute Ensemble, Ensemble Sospeso and as a frequent guest of many New York City-based orchestras. Marianne is on the faculty at the University of Delaware, where she specializes in electro-acoustic performance and chamber music. She can be heard on recordings by CBS Masterworks, Albany, CRI, Koch and Mode Records.

A member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, clarinetist **Alan R. Kay** was awarded the C.D. Jackson Award at Tanglewood, a 2002 Presidential

Scholars Teachers Award, and the 1989 Young Concert Artists Award with Hexagon. The newest member of the New Millennium Ensemble, he is also a member of the quintet Windscape, appears across the U.S. in chamber music series and festivals, and directs a concert series at the Cape May Festival. Mr. Kay studied conducting at Juilliard and appears as a guest conductor principally in the New York City area. He teaches at the Manhattan, Hartt and Juilliard Schools. He has participated in over 50 CDs. He is the proud father of two boys, Noah and Jonathan.

Violinist **Sunghae Anna Lim** has concertized throughout the U.S., Central America, Europe and Japan. In addition to playing in the New Millennium Ensemble, Ms. Lim performs with the Laurel Piano Trio, winner of the ProPiano and Concert Artist Guild competitions. Festival appearances include Marlboro, Ravinia, Prussia Cove, Tanglewood and the Portland Chamber Music Festival. Ms. Lim teaches at Princeton University, where she is a member of the Richardson Chamber Players. She has recorded for Koch International, CRI, Albany Records, Bridge Records and Newport Classics.

**Gregory Hesselink** leads an eclectic musical life as a performer and teacher. In addition to the NME, he is a member of Sequitur, the Locrian Chamber Players, New Band, Vision Into Art, and is principal cellist of the Riverside Symphony. He has premiered more than 100 works worldwide including cello concertos by James Tenney, Daniel Weymouth and Ross



Bauer, and has performed on the tenor violin, electric bass, tromba marina and numerous Harry Partch instruments. He has recorded for CRI, None such, Bridge, Koch, Albany, Wergo, Innova, PPI and Point Records and teaches at Mannes Pre-college. During the summer, He teaches at Apple Hill and is a regular participant at the Monadnock Festival.

Since receiving her Doctor of Musical Arts degree, pianist **Margaret Kampmeier** has performed in hundreds of concerts, presented numerous premieres and recorded extensively. She is a founding member of the Naumburg award-winning New Millennium Ensemble, and performs regularly with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Ms. Kampmeier has appeared often with the Kronos Quartet, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Saratoga Chamber Players, Richardson Chamber Players, Peter Schickele and many new music ensembles including Sequitur, Newband, and Speculum Musicae. A dedicated educator, she teaches at Princeton University.

**John Ferrari** is active performing in genres from classical to pop and the avant-garde, and appears on dozens of recordings as percussionist, drummer and conductor. He is a regular guest artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Chamber Music Northwest, and he has been a member of Meridian Arts Ensemble since 1993. He holds DMA and MM degrees from SUNY Stony Brook, and a BM from William Paterson University where he serves on the performing arts faculty. In 2007 he joined the faculty of Manhattan School of Music's Masters in Contemporary Performance program.

**Producer:** Judith Sherman

**Engineer:** Judith Sherman

**Assistant Engineer:** Jeanne Velonis

**Assistant Editors:** Jeanne Velonis and Hsi-Ling Chang (*Triptych*)

**Design:** Douglas H. Holly

The cover image is from a sonogram of a passage from *After Blue*.

**Photo Credit:** Richard Festinger photo on tray by Joanna Morrissey, New Millennium Ensemble photo by Brenda Brown.

**Executive Producers:** David and Becky Starobin

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City

*After Blue* and *Variations for Piano* recorded January 15, 2001;

*Triptych* recorded January 16, 2001; *Peripeteia* recorded April 24, 2006;

*Construction en metal et bois* recorded September 30, 2006.

*After Blue* and *Variations for Piano* are published by C.F. Peters Corp. of New York.

Bridge Records offers special thanks to Howard Stokar.

Funding for this recording was generously provided by the Argosy Fund for Contemporary Music, the National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco State University, the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, and private gifts.



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