

Thomas DeLio Selected Compositions II (1972-2015)

inents (version 1, 2015)

anti-paysage (1990)

anti-paysage II (2013)

- en / l'espace de... (2007)

inents (version 2, 2015)

x,e (1999)

Text (1983)

inc,e (1999)

Transparent Wave II (1993)

m,nce (1999;)

not (1992)

Serenade (1974)

n,c (1998)

A Draft of Shadows (1972)

NEUMA
450-108

Thomas DeLio

Selected Compositions (1972-2015)

anti-paysage II constitutes an example of what I have labeled a *deconstruction*, in which I create an electronic composition based upon a recorded performance of one of my own earlier instrumental works. Previously, I created three such compositions: *...transients* (2011; tape), based upon *transients / images* (2006; percussion, piano); *as though / of* (1999; tape), based upon *as though* (1994; percussion solo); and, *Center / s* (2000; tape), based upon *Center* (1999; solo voice).³ *anti-paysage II* is based upon *anti-paysage* (1990; flute, percussion, piano, tape). For me, in this new electro-acoustic context, the original acoustic sonorities seem more concrete; they appear as purely physical entities fusing with the sonorities surrounding them, rather than as the by-product of compositional/performance rhetoric. My goal in each of these deconstructions is to recapture the purely physical qualities of instrumental sonorities; to project those sonorities not as the products of actions or gestures – the products of purpose – but as purely physical realities. The original, instrumental, *anti-paysage* is in four parts and, at the time of its composition, constituted one of my more extensive explorations of discontinuity and non-linearity. I incorporated enormous spans of silence into the design of this piece without, I hope, losing the coherence of a single musical evolution. I wanted each silence to push the sonic events surrounding it away from one another, thereby ensuring the ultimate isolation of each event. In this sense, as in all of my works, silence became an active force pushing out from within itself, keeping the events of sound from connecting. At the beginning of *anti-paysage* I integrated a rather irregular sequence of silences into a somewhat conventional phrase structure. Silences within phrases tended to be rather long – relative to the lengths of the phrases themselves – and often stretched those phrases nearly to the breaking point of coherence. This is reflected in the overall evolution of the piece, for silence comes more and more to dominate the composition as it

unfolds. In addition, gradually, over the course of the piece, the flute, percussion and piano drop out leaving the tape alone sounding in the final minutes. In a way, *anti-paysage II* reverses this process, as it projects new sonic connections that cross the barriers created by silence.

inents (2014) is my third setting of the poem *aengus* by P. Inman.¹ The first, “*aengus*” (2013), was a sound installation; the second, *Song: “aengus”* (2013), an electro-acoustic composition in surround sound.² Both of these settings of *aengus* are drawn from recordings of the text read by six different readers, three male and three female, which provided the source material for each work. For *inents* I returned to the same six recorded readings. Indeed, *all* sounds heard in this piece are derived from those readings. Prior to *inents*, in my electroacoustic work with text, I typically broke up words and phrases to the point where they were generally unintelligible. My impetus for *inents*, however, was to create an electroacoustic setting in which the text would often be apprehensible, on the surface of the composition. I wanted the text as spoken by the various readers to be heard side-by-side with the fragmented, transformed elements from which the language is made. I feel that, in this context, the result renders the moments where we simply hear people reading the text as music. We become aware of the timbre of each individual voice, the timing of each reading, pauses, breathing... I want the listener to experience even a “straightforward” reading (if there is such a thing) as itself, first and foremost, a sonic event. (Perhaps this is a sonic reflection of the linguistic variability that Inman infuses into his poetry.) Even normal speech becomes a musical event when placed in the context of the chopped up, filtered phonemes and stretched, attenuated consonants which create the sonic framework within which these simple readings are often heard (and now recognized as not so simple).

For these pieces I developed a new idea of form (new, at least for me), also inspired by the often variable formal (often visual) designs of Inman’s poems. For this piece I first created approximately forty sound events: some containing the aforementioned straightforward readings of the poem; others containing words and

phrases transformed sonically in different ways (filtering, reverberation, cross synthesis...). The events ranged from complete readings, through partial readings, to transformations wherein speech was still partially recognizable, finally to events where the source of the sound material was only barely recognizable as speech. I also created a series of time-frames which ranged from quite short (20") to over a minute. Each sonic event sits somewhere within one of these time-frames and this seems to convey a strangely open quality to the final composition; a feeling of moments and surfaces floating freely in time and space. I then arranged these events in different ways to create multiple versions of the composition – the shortest around five minutes, the longest around sixteen. Some were created in stereo, where nothing would take attention away from the sound material, others in surround sound (in which spatialization became a component of the experience), and one surround version with a brief bit of video. No version contains all of the sound events and all present the events in different orders. My goal in determining the order in each version was to create a disjunct succession of events, to create a kaleidoscopic sense of the juxtaposition of the various presentations of material. My guiding rule-of-thumb for each version was to try to create a succession of events in which similarity and connection would become meaningless in the creation of hierarchical relationships. Curiously, I initially thought that I might leave it up to the listener to create his/her own order, but, over time, this seemed less and less desirable to me. Sensitivity and care was needed in order to create the multilayered, non-linear experience that I wanted to convey. I also hope that different listeners may become familiar with different, but not all versions, so that each listener will have a different sense of what the piece is.

Two stereo versions are presented on this disc.

Three instrumental compositions included on this CD – *not* (1992), *Transparent Wave II* (1993), *en l'espace* (2007) – and four electronic compositions – *m,nce* (1997), *n,c* (1998), *x,e* (1999), *inc,e* (1999) – though very short, are neither sketches nor miniatures in any sense. Rather, each is a full-scale work, which

consists of a few highly compressed sound events surrounded by a silence that both activates those events and, in turn, is activated by them. My approach to composition, to which I came quite subconsciously, crystallized in works such as these. In them, I attempted to reduce the music's surface to just a few sound events separated – pushed apart – by large quantities of silence; sound events pushed into isolation. Often writers and scholars comment that my music is about silence. However, it is actually about sound. I use silence, among other things, to frame sound so we may experience it in new ways, highlighting qualities of sound perhaps otherwise lost. Typically, such compositions are constructed from discrete segments of music which, though they coexist as a group, never become fixed with respect to one another through hierarchical relationships; in this respect my pieces are never organic. Only the direct perception of the moment seems important to me. Thus, in constructing these short works, I found myself less and less interested in creating states of order or disorder, but, rather, in reconstructing the gray area that separates them.

The three oldest pieces on this CD are *A Draft of Shadows* (1972), *Serenade* (1974), and *Text* (1983). *A Draft of Shadows* (1972), a student work, is based upon two texts by the Mexican poet Octavio Paz and scored for soprano, percussion and piano. The texts suggested the sounds of various instruments used in the piece: the white noise emanating from the maracas in the second movement reflect the reference to “dust” in the text, and the whispering in the fourth movement reflects the oft-repeated references to “stones” and “wind.” I wanted the piece to develop in such a way that the last two movements would crystalize in the separation of two basic sound types: white noise (whispering and maracas) in movement IV; pitch (piano) in movement V. This opposition seemed to speak to the sense of separation and isolation expressed in the texts.

Formally, both in terms of its larger form and local events, the work is a reflection of the shape of a typical sonic event: attack, sustain and decay – at least

as I understood them in 1972. The first movement was intended to reflect, expand and amplify the noisy attack transients which initiate sounds; the second movement, the more sustained portions of a sound; the third and fourth movements, various aspects of decay; finally, the last movement, a piano solo (re-introducing the piano sounds of the second movement) a series of miniature reflections of the overall design of the piece experienced in the attack and decay of each note.

Serenade for solo piano was composed in response to a commission from the pianist-musicologist Ivan Waldbauer, to whom it is dedicated. In it I explored various applications of mathematical information theory to musical composition, which interested me a great deal at the time. The work is in three sections and traces the evolution and dissolution of various fixed pitch and time fields that are continuously juxtaposed and transformed as the composition unfolds.

Text is one of a pair of piano pieces from the early '80's - the other is *Sequence* (1983) – which were, at least in part, computer generated scores based upon several compositional algorithms. Within each section of *Text* several time points were chosen. These then functioned as points of attraction, around which pitches clustered in varying densities and combinations (which to my mind 'color' each cluster). In each section, the time points vary in number and distribution, as well as the degree to which they attract individual pitches.

1. P. Inman, *aengus* from *P. Inman 2 poems* (London: tolling elves 4, 2002); reprinted in *ad finitum* (Manchester: if p then q classics, 2008).
2. For a recording of "aengus" (2013) see *Thomas DeLio: space / image / word / sound* (Neuma DVD 450-201); for a recordings of *Song: "aengus"* see *Thomas DeLio: Selected Compositions, 1991-2013* (Neuma CD 450-108).
3. For recordings of *...transients* (2011; tape), *as though / of* (1999; tape), and *Center / s* (2000; tape) see *Thomas DeLio: Selected Compositions, 1991-2013* (Neuma CD 450-108).

“aengus”

P. Inman

a.
noft.
bluff.

pith.

n'owl.

vowel.
soddbble.

laced.

_____ief.

neapl.

croft.

veteen.

length.

anisetete.

pages.

ocean.

inents.
evasp.

a.
quo.

Texts by Octavio Paz

Epitafio sobre ninguna piedra

Mixcoac fue mi pueblo.
Tres silabas nocturnas,
un antifaz de sombra sobre un rostro solar.
Vino y se lo comió la tolvanera.
Yo me escapé y anduve por el mundo.
Mi casa fueron mis palabras, mi tumba el aire.

Epitaph for no stone

Mixcoac was my village.
Three nocturnal syllables
a half-mask of shadow across a solar face.
Clouds of dust came and ate it.
I escaped and walked through the world.
My words were my house, air my tomb.

Pueblo

Las pedras son tiempo
El viento
Siglos de viento
Los árboles son tiempo
La gentes son piedra
El viento
Vuelve sobre si mismo y se entierra
En el día de piedra
No hay agua pero brillan los ojos

Village

The stones are time
The wind
Centuries of wind
The trees are time
The people are stone
The wind
Turns upon itself and sinks
Into the stone day
There is no water here for all the lustre
of its eyes

THOMAS DELIO (b. 1951) is a composer and theorist. His music has been performed worldwide and recorded on numerous labels including Wergo (Germany), 3D Classics (France), Neuma, Centaur, Capstone, ERMMedia and Spectrum. He has published over thirty essays in such journals as *Perspectives of New Music*, *The Journal of Music Theory*, *Interface*, *Sonus*, *Artforum*, *Contemporary Music Review* (London), *Revue d'Esthetique* (Paris), and *MusikTexte* (Cologne). A number of these essays have been anthologized and translated into German, French and Italian. He has also published books about contemporary music, most notably *Circumscribing the Open Universe* (University Press of America; Italian translation, Editore Semar, Rome), *The Music of Morton Feldman* (Greenwood Press), and *The Amores of John Cage* (Pendragon Press). The book, *Essays on the Music and Theoretical Writings of Thomas DeLio*, Thomas Licata, ed. (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008) contains essays by leading composers and scholars from Europe and the United States. His *Collected Essays, Volume I (1980-2000)* is forthcoming from the same press. In 2012 The University of Maryland Special Collections Division established the archive, *The Thomas DeLio Paper*, which holds sketches and manuscripts for his music, books and essays; tapes from numerous recording sessions; and correspondence with Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, Alvin Lucier, Morton Feldman, Elliott Carter, Sol LeWitt, and P. Inman, among others.

P. INMAN is a poet whose work has been published in Canada, France, Great Britain, Spain and the U.S. His books include: *Ocker* (Tuumba, 1982), *Platin* (Sun and Moon, 1979), *Uneven Development* (Jimmy's House of Knowledge, 1984), *Red Shift* (Roof Books, 1988), *Vel* (O Books, 1995), *Criss Cross* (Roof Books, 1994), *amounts. to.* (Potes & Poets Press, 2000), *ad finitum* (if p then q, 2008), *per se* (Burning Deck, 2012). *written*, a volume of his collected works, was published in 2014 (if p then q classics).

OCTAVIO PAZ, distinguished Mexican poet and diplomat, was the recipient of numerous awards including the Miguel de Cervantes Prize, the Neustadt International Prize for Literature and the Nobel Prize in Literature. From 1969 to 1970 he was Simon Bolivar Professor at Cambridge University and from 1970 to 1974 he lectured at Harvard University, where he held the Charles Eliot Norton Professorship.

MICHAEL DEWART (pianist) performed extensively throughout New England as both a soloist and accompanist. He presented works of Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions, Pierre Boulez

and Luciano Berio and premiered many works by younger composers. Mr. Dewart premiered Thomas DeLio's *Serenade* in 1978 in Boston.

JOHN FONVILLE (flutist/composer) is dedicated to extending the language and technique of the flute. He has premiered numerous works by such distinguished composers as Ben Johnston, Sal Martirano, Joji Yuasa and Roger Reynolds. He has recorded these and many other works on such labels as CRI, New World, Neuma, OO Discs, Advance, TR2, Orion, Opus One and Einstein Recordings.

ALEX FRAGISKATOS (percussionist/composer) has composed, commissioned, and premiered works in a variety of settings. In addition to contemporary percussion and chamber music, he has an avid interest in the steel drum music of Trinidad and Tobago, which he has taught and played professionally. Alex has performed with the Akron Symphony Orchestra, Richmond Symphony Orchestra, West Valley Symphony, and Akros Percussion Collective. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in percussion from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music and The University of Akron, respectively. A native of Ohio, Alex currently resides in Tempe, Arizona where he is working on his doctorate at Arizona State University.

ALECK KARIS (pianist) has championed the music of such composers as Elliott Carter, Mario Davidovsky, and John Cage. Among his numerous solo piano discs are acclaimed recordings of Stravinsky, Schumann, Carter and Cage on Nonesuch, New World, Neuma, Centaur, Bridge and CRI. His solo album for Bridge Records of music by Chopin, Carter and Schumann was nominated for "Best Recording of the Year" by OPUS Magazine (1987) and his recording of *Sonatas and Interludes* by John Cage received a Critic's Choice from Gramophone in 1999. He has been featured at leading international festivals in Bath, Geneva, Sao Paulo, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Caramoor, and Warsaw.

SIU YIN LIE (pianist) has given solo recitals in France, Italy, Japan, and her native Hong Kong, where she also appeared in concerto performances with the Hong Kong Philharmonic. Since coming to the U.S. she has performed at the Aspen and Bowdoin Music Festivals and won several competitions, including the Maryland Young Artist Piano Competition and the Tuesday Musical Competition of Ohio. She is greatly indebted to her teachers, pianists Uriel Tsachor, John O'Connor, and Sally Pinkas. She was a scholarship student at the Cleveland

Institute of Music, as well as a teaching assistant and staff accompanist at the University of Iowa. Currently she is pursuing her doctorate at Arizona State University.

JACQUES LINDER (piano) has presented solo recitals at such institutions as The Camargo Foundation (Cassis, France), French National Television, Luxembourg City, The University of Maryland at College Park, Colgate University, Hamilton College, The Worcester Art Museum, The Dali Museum (St. Petersburg, Florida), Clark University and the University of South Florida, among many others. He has been a featured soloist in festivals of contemporary music throughout Europe and the US. He taught at Clark University in Worcester, MA and the University of South Florida. Jacques Linder has recorded for Neuma Records, 3-D Classics (Paris) and Capstone Recordings.

STACEY MASTRIAN (soprano, www.staceymastrian.com) is a Fulbright Grantee, Beebe Fellow, and Richard F. Gold Career Grant recipient. Her repertoire extends from Monteverdi to the 21st century. She has sung with the Konzerthaus Orchestra (Berlin), Nova Amadeus Orchestra (Rome), and at such venues as the Fondazione Cini (Venice), Chapelle historique du Bon-Pasteur (Montréal), Teatro La Fenice (Venice), St. Peter's (Vatican City), and, in collaboration with Nuria Schoenberg Nono, at the Conservatorio di Musica Respighi (Latina). In the US she has performed with the Vocal Arts Society, Opera Lafayette (Kennedy Center) and Rose Hall-Jazz (Lincoln Center). *The New York Times* has praised her for "intensity, focus, and a warm, passionate sound," and the *Berliner Zeitung* has hailed her singing as "very impressive...tremendous ease and beauty."

STEVEN SCHICK (percussion) is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego. He was the founding member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars (1992-2002) and Artistic Director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève (2000-2005). Currently he is Music Director of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, Artistic Director of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and Music Director of the Ojai Festival. In 2012 he became the first Artist-in-Residence with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). In addition, Schick maintains a lively schedule as a conductor with such institutions as the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Asko/Schoenberg Ensemble. He can be heard on numerous recordings including a 3 CD set of the complete percussion music of Iannis Xenakis (*Mode*), and a DVD of the early

percussion music of Karlheinz Stockhausen (Mode). He is the author of the acclaimed book, *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams*.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE (Lee Hinkle, director; Maurice Watkins, Robert Bowen, Robert Schroyer, percussion). Lee Hinkle has performed with the National Symphony Orchestra, Florida Orchestra, Left Bank Concert Society, and the Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra. An active percussion recitalist, he has presented solo recitals and master classes at universities and festivals across the U.S. Lee Hinkle has several CDs to his credit, on such labels as Capstone Records and the C.F. Peter's Corporation label.

ROBERT IAN WINSTIN was a champion of contemporary American Music. He released a series of path-breaking recordings of new music on the ERMMedia label. The **Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra** is among the oldest and most famous Czech orchestras. The orchestra performs in the Rudolfinum's Dvořák Concert Hall in Prague. Its principal conductors have included such distinguished musicians as Karel Ančerl and Alois Klíma.

This CD was mastered by **Antonino d'Urzo**, Opusrite Studios, Hyattsville, Maryland.

The composition entitled *not* was recorded by Clarke Rigsby, Tempest Recording, Tempe AZ.

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