

SPRING 2008 COMPOSER COMPOSITION STATEMENTS & BIOS

PETE SUTHERLAND

Composition Statement

I originally made a song called "When The Torch is Passed" for Rachel Bissex, performed it with fellow composers and regular sidemen Colin McCaffrey and Will Patton at a "Petestock" concert, recorded a quick demo and sent it to her just a few weeks before she passed away in 2005. Rachel and I were in a monthly songwriting group together in the early years of the present decade and enjoyed a number of lively discussions about the writing life. Apart from the thought of this vital life force leaving our circle, I was under the musical and socio-political influence of my delta blues-picking and songwriting friend Scott Ainslie of Brattleboro. The text is my attempt to address the not-always-comfortable - or convenient - "call" to pursue the artist's life. I rewrote the lyric and melody for this project of my old choral alma mater Social Band, thinking of their particularly warm SATB sound all the while. I'm sure there's a bit of African-style choral influence and groove here.

Biography

PETE SUTHERLAND, Monkton. For several decades, Pete has brought original and age-old acoustic folk music to stages and festivals across North America and Europe. He has played with, sung in and composed for half a dozen groups, including Metamora, Rhythm In Shoes, the Clayfoot Strutters and as a charter member of Social Band. He has helped hundreds of folks to improve their skills at music camps nationwide, and has had a parallel career in the recording studio as producer and project manager. An active dance musician, Pete loves the fiddle the best of all the instruments he plays, has composed dozens of solo, choral and instrumental pieces. Lately his interest in becoming more involved with the folk choral world has seen him leading both adult and teen Village Harmony camps. www.epactmusic.com

COLIN MCCAFFREY

Composition Statement

The bulk of this piece came to me while walking in the woods. The composing was done in my head, and the words came as I sang the melody. I based the initial melody on a pentatonic scale to get an ancient sound. When harmonizing it I tried to create dissonance reflective of Balkan singing and Jazz inspired chord voicings. Lots of open fifths gave it a Gregorian chant feel, and the first line of the lyric sounds like it was written by a pirate. So, there you go! An old Balkan Monk named Thelonus with an eye-patch.

Biography

I was born and raised in southern Vermont. I listened to music constantly as a young boy. It was whatever I could reach in my parent's record collection: Appalachian, Classical, Blues, Irish folk music. Eventually it became my older brother's record collection: Jazz and Rock. I had parents who knew I would never be happy unless making music my life. I went to Berklee College of Music and studied Composition, then moved back to Vermont to study life. I have made my living at music for nearly a dozen years, and my wife is a full-time writer and writing teacher. While I am not an openly religious person, I believe passionately in my work, my service to others and the existence of my soul. While I may be deluded in imagining such an order or meaning to life, I DO know I seem fulfilled singing and believing as such.

www.colinmccaffrey.com

JEREMIAH MCLANE

Composition Statement

The text for this piece, a poem by Karla Van Vliet, is based on a dream I had in which a man works a large millstone. Karla and I are part of North of Eden, a group working with dreams for personal and spiritual growth. The theme of work is not only held in the physical elements of my dream but also in the work we do at North of Eden where, much like the physical work the father is doing in the poem, we work to pare away our false selves to reveal the truth within. To find the music, I started by singing the words to myself over & over til I had a melody, heard mostly in the sopranos, and then added harmony in a hymn like way which I thought would fit the Social Band sound. Some of the lines have a slightly Baroque sound to them which I think fits the old world feel of the lyrics. This is my first choral piece.

Biography

Accordionist, pianist and composer Jeremiah McLane has taught and performed throughout the United States and Europe. He is an adjunct faculty member of SUNY Plattsburgh, NY and is director of the Floating Bridge Music School in Sharon, Vermont, where he lives. He has composed music for theatre and film, including Sam Shepard's "A Lie of the Mind", and Vermont filmmaker Nora Jacobson's "Letters of My Mother's Early Lovers". He has received grants from the Ontario Center for the Performing Arts, the Vermont Council on the Arts, the Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust, and the Gadd Merrill Fund. He has released nine CDs. His second solo recording, Smile When You're Ready, was nominated by National Public Radio in their "favorite picks" of 1996, and his third release, Hummingbird, received the French music magazine "Trad Mag" BRAVO award for 2003. Jeremiah performs regularly with Le Bon Vent, Nightingale, and The Clayfoot Strutters. www.jeremiahmclane.com

DAVID GUNN

Composition Statement

Social Band asked for a song about work. Ascribing to the adage, "write what you know," my path straightaway shifted to procrastination. Outside of a dull article in "The Dilatorium," texts on the subject were scarce, indeed. Ergo, I opted to write my own – but, naturally, not before dilly-dallying for a while. A long while. And although I was unable to discover my urban gangsta soul while writing it, I did find something just as important: a roll each of nickels, dimes and quarters. Hey, that's seventeen bucks!

Biography

David Gunn's music is equally at home in Carnegie Hall as in a gravity-depleted amphitheater on the planet Zombocartumia. He has written for full symphony orchestra, chamber ensembles and soloists, as well as adventurous vocal groups. Ray Bradbury's Pandemonium Theatre Company has five times trod the California boards accompanied by his incidental music. (If you were wondering, one of the "incidents" occurred on Zombocartumia.) He has written three string quartets for Ethel and is contemplating a fourth. The Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble has commissioned no fewer than 12 pieces from him. (Also no more than 12: a composer's life is not an easy one.) In 2003, Albany Records released Somewhere East of Topeka, a CD of his chamber music performed by VCME. Brisk sales are anticipated any day now. For 10½ years, Gunn co-hosted the award-winning weekly radio show Kalvos & Damian's New Music Bazaar. Gunn is also a writer and humorist, and lives simultaneously in Barre, Vermont and in hope of, in order, peace on earth, good will towards men, and a pile of cash in the bank.

www.kalvos.org/gunnd.html

THOMAS L. READ

Composition Statement

For my contribution to The Social Band's repertoire I've chosen to set two of O.W. Holmes' poems: an early, playful rhyme and a later, serious and suitably upright homily that the poet supplied for an anniversary of the Berkshire Agricultural Society. I've set all five stanzas of ***The Treadmill*** (1836) and a selection of lines from ***The Ploughman*** (1849) that were published as part of a collection entitled "Work Songs in Many Keys." These texts resonated with me, offering, when placed side by side, a timely, ironic and allegorical frame. Irresistibly, they also permitted multiple settings of my e-mail handle, tread@uvm.edu.

The same melody is repeated for each stanza of ***The Treadmill***, but each repetition is given to a different voice accompanied by different harmonies and rhythms. The music of the Ploughman begins suddenly- a rude, stark interruption of the merry proceedings of the treadmill workers. Now there is almost no exact melodic repetition, and rather than progressive, the harmonies are static. Finally, a partial reprise of the treadmill music, emphasizing the last line ("I mean to have a treadmill of my own,"), brings my chorus to a smugly triumphant close.

Biography

Thomas L. Read, composer and violinist, is Professor of Music at the University of Vermont. He has composed music for a variety of media and almost entirely on commission- music for small ensembles, full orchestra, solo voice, chorus and musical theater. He has been a recipient of several Arts Council and University Stipends, and has been awarded fellowships from organizations such as the McDowell Colony, the Charles Ives Institute, and the Johnson Composers Conference. Recent premieres include the Piano Partita (nominated for Pulitzer prize in 2007), Night Pageantries for bassoon and piano, and Going On for clarinet, violin and piano. His third string quartet will be premiered in Kiev, Russia in April. A recording of On October Ground, performed by Philharmonica Bulgarica has been released by ERM Media Masterworks Recordings. C.F.Peters, Tunbridge Music, Tuba Euphonium Press and the American Composers Edition publish his work. www.thomaslread.com