

Steven M. Miller



B E T W E E N N O I S E A N D S I L E N C E

THERE ARE TWO MAIN WAYS that I make music:

My solo music is about exploring various characteristics of sound itself, such as timbre, density, texture, and trying to discover interesting sounds that have a life of their own by combining analog sounds with digital processing. I like the richness of analog sounds but I also like the flexible control that the digital world provides. It's very personal music that rewards and inspires me in various ways.

With other people, my role is as a mediator of the social dynamic between improvising musicians. I'm interested in redistributing the responsibility of the final outcome, in creating a situation where the individual is not the only agent responsible for his or her own sounds. It's a particular kind of group exploration where no one is really in control but we are all contributing to the sound we collectively make, pushing things in a certain direction to see what happens. It's about the sound, but also about exploring the social dynamic of interdependence.

I've made a lot of music over the years that is not publicly available. This collection is a parting gift to my family and friends. Thank you to all who have helped out so much. I appreciate your love and support. I wish everyone everywhere much love and beauty in your lives.

Steven M. Miller

AS I WRITE THIS, Steven M. Miller is in the hospital nearing the end of his struggle with ALS. But he is still with us, and I can't bring myself to speak of him in the past tense. So I will speak of who he is, even now. He is an excellent friend, musical collaborator, and colleague. He is a born teacher who is always generous with his time, knowledge, experience, and attention. His listening runs wide and deep, remarkable for both its inclusiveness and discernment. His integrity, creativity, insight, curiosity, patience, humor, and especially his courage are an inspiration to me and to many others. I admire him as an artist who has persisted in doing his work, always against the odds of what typically passes for "success" in our culture—literally to the end. I am honored that he has asked me to participate in this project that will share his work with the world. I can say that I am a better and happier person for having Steven in my life, and I will always think of him with great affection, love, and a smile.

Wherever you are going, travel well, dear friend.
Let the sound guide you on your way.

Steve Peters
10 October 2014

Between Noise and Silence

Dedicated to Marla and Lanora

DISC 1

Subterranea p.7

- 1 **Prelude: Element 1 – Suksma** 1993, 4:39
- 2 **The Shadow of the Mosque** 1991, 12:25
- 3 **Beirut** 1996, 3:35
- 4 **Under The World Tree** 1994, 5:31
- 5 **Interlude: Element 2 – Jiwa** 1993, 3:41
- 6 **Zen** 1995, 4:50
- 7 **Lost Temples** 1996, 7:58
- 8 **Subterranea** 1996, 7:27
- 9 **Postlude: Element 3 – Prana** 1993, 4:14

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At the Outpost p.11

DISC 2 – MAY 10, 1997

- 1 **Solo 1** (Bells) (for David Mahler) 16:38
- 2 **Duo 1** 10:02
- 3 **Trio 1** 8:23
- 4 **Solo 2** (Suling) (for Ingram Marshall) 8:59
- 5 **Duo 2** 9:34
- 6 **Trio 2** (Becoming...) 11:59
- 7 **Quartet** (Create A Space) 8:03

DISC 3 – FEBRUARY 21, 1998

- 1 **Duet 1** 18:02
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- 3 **Quartet** 7:33
- 4 **Duet 3** 8:27

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- 1 **Glass Piece**
(for Annea Lockwood) 1998, 71:27

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- 1 **SlowFire**
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THREE PIECES FOR CHRIS MANN 1996

- 2 **Free Rain** 0:59
- 3 **Interruptions** 1:06
- 4 **Fire Crackers/Far Apart** 0:59
- 5 **In the Absence of the Sacred** 1997, 11:04
- 6 **Pulse Canon** (for Larry Polansky) 2003, 3:20
- 7 **The Flow of Time**
(for Willa Roberts) 2000, 5:00
- 8 **Pohon Berbunga**
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(for Steve Peters) 2002, 24:57
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(for David Tudor) 2006, 12:08
- 4 **Motors**
(for Ty Constant and Peter Edwards) 2010, 17:05

DISC 7 (DVD)

Scenes of Inquiry

Short Films of Michael J. Saul
with Music by Steven M. Miller p.27

- Morning Dance** 1988, 10:00
Dominus 1991, 13:00
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Don't Read Now 2006, 10:00

BONUS FEATURES:

- Behind the Videos Documentary 16:00
- "Don't Read Now" Gallery Demo 5:00
- Trailer "True Love" 1:20

Fully-restored versions of Steven M. Miller's music:

- **Terra Incognita** (used in "Morning Dance")
- **The Shadow of the Mosque** (used in "Dominus")
- **The Grass is Singing** (used in "Hover")
- **Under the World Tree** (used in "Hover")
- **Zen** (used in "Don't Read Now")
- **SlowFire** (used in "True Love")

DISC 8

Music for
Steven M. Miller p.29

- 1 **Namaste** ANNEA LOCKWOOD, 2014, 3:34
- 2 **Sunya 1** DAVID DUNN, 2014, 12:19
- 3 **Composite Memory** STEVE PETERS, 2014, 8:11
- 4 **Tempat Bermain** GREGORY TAYLOR, 2014, 5:56
- 5 **Turnstile** DINO J.A. DEANE, 2013, 5:59
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- 7 **Pauline's Solo** PAULINE OLIVEROS, 2008, 16:12
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Notes on Music for Steven M. Miller
not included on the CD p.32

INGRAM MARSHALL

Escape (based on an excerpt from **Alcatraz**)

PAULINE OLIVEROS

A Gathering of Voices for Steven M. Miller
(text score on page 35)

LARRY POLANSKY

וייער (V'ya'al) (and he ascended)



DISC 1

Subterranea

STEVEN M. MILLER

- 1 **Prelude: Element 1 – Suksma** 1993, 4:39
- 2 **The Shadow of the Mosque** 1991, 12:25
- 3 **Beirut** 1996, 3:35
- 4 **Under The World Tree** 1994, 5:31
- 5 **Interlude: Element 2 – Jiwa** 1993, 3:41*
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- 9 **Postlude: Element 3 – Prana** 1993, 4:14

All pieces composed, performed, and recorded by Steven M. Miller, © 1991–1997 Steven M. Miller/Tauffan Music (BMI).

Produced by Steven M. Miller. Original release production coordination by Renzo Pognant. Originally released on New Tone/Robi Droli Records (FY 7002), Italy, 1997.

*not included on original release.

All of the music on this CD came about in the six-years from 1991 to 1996—after a period of creative inaction, but great fertility, which followed my return from a yearlong stay in Central Java and Bali, Indonesia. On the surface, the only clear relation to any of the musics I heard and studied in Indonesia is the use of the *suling* (Javanese & Balinese bamboo flute) on several pieces, and the inclusion of several soundscape recordings from

Java. In a much deeper way, however, all of these pieces are a direct result of—even a response to—my experiences in Java & Bali and the various ways in which over the ensuing years I have processed the information and situations encountered there.

In the two years spanning late 1989 to late 1991, a period which encompassed my yearlong Java/Bali stay and the year following my return, I was compositionally quiet, but music was ever present in my inner creative being. It wasn't until I was commissioned to compose the score for an experimental video project (*Morning Dance* by Michael J. Saul) in December 1991 that I felt ready to start putting into creative use the new ideas that had been forming. This marked the beginning of a rather productive time for me as a composer and musician.

In terms of sound, structure, and texture, the pieces included on the CD are in some ways rather disparate, but they all share at least several common threads: 1) All are composed using electronic processing to transform and extend sound sources that are originally acoustic. The resulting sonic elements in each case are the artifacts of a process of exploration in a studio setting, during which individual elements were discovered and which in turn suggested various ways of treating them, ordering them, and placing them in relation to one another. 2) All, save one, are improvisations.

The improvisations presented are essentially explorations of timbre and the formal concerns that are suggested by the materials themselves. A primary interest is the re-ordering of time as it is in the moment of unfolding. The re-ordering takes place on multiple levels simultaneously—from the micro (timbral) through to the various levels of macro (phrase,

section, structure, etc.). To be able to manipulate the aspect of time, to envelope oneself in multiple simultaneous iterations of a single moment in time, to contract and expand the time-space at will; these are indeed the materials and forces at work.

The deeper relationship these pieces share, for me, is that of an exploration of the concept of “the passage of time” and the sense of how to release oneself from the idea of music as existing in—ever demanding to be experienced as—a linear representation of time. An interest for me here has been how to divorce the sensation of time from the experience of music—developing pieces which seem to just “exist in time” rather than delineate the marking of time into units of measure. This is, ultimately, one of the most intriguing concepts I have encountered, in ways both musical and cultural, in my own experiences of Java and Bali.

“Beirut,” “Lost Temples,” and “Subterranea” are real-time improvisations recorded live to tape in single passes. These pieces use fragments and loops of a Balinese flute phrase as the primary sound source, manipulated in various ways. “The Shadow of the Mosque,” “Element 1 – Suksma,” and “Element 2 – Jiwa” are non-real-time improvisations in which I systematically built up individual sound streams, recording each improvised layer onto multi-track tape. The final improvisations involved the mixing, juxtaposition, and further processing of these aggregate sound textures into single entities that comprise the final forms of the compositions.

“Under the World Tree” and “Element 3 – Prana” are in a sense more “traditional” improvisations, in that I performed the individual flute lines in response to the musical material that had been previously

generated. In the former case this results in a duet between a small Balinese suling and a larger transverse bamboo flute (in a different tuning system); in the latter, a sort of parallel to the functional role of the Javanese *pathetan* which is an improvisatory piece that is usually prepended or appended to a larger fixed composition, used to establish or reinforce the mood, context, and materials of the musical mode employed. Here, it functions to release the listener from the gravitational pull of the preceding compositions.

The only piece here not resulting from improvisation is “Zen,” which is the result of a rather radical transformation of the sounds and silences of Zen Buddhist percussion into a cyclical ebb and flow of harmonic material.

—Steven M. Miller, April 1997 & September 2006, Santa Fe, NM

In 1971 when I went to Indonesia and studied both Javanese and Balinese music traditions, I made the discovery that time in music can be very slow, nearly glacial. Music needn't move in increments of split seconds at all, but in minutes: my approach to composing was deeply affected by this. Twenty years later, Steven M. Miller seems to have made a similar discovery, although when he writes about it in his notes, he puts it in more succinct terms. That is, in fact, the quality of his music that attracts me, whether it's a soundscape such as “The Shadow of the Mosque” or the seductive timbral study of “Element 1 – Suksma,” which sounds almost Messiaenesque in its organ-like sonorities.

I am always suspicious of Western composers who go too far in their assimilation of non-Western

music, regardless of how well they do it. It almost always ends up sounding fake. Steven's immersion in the music of Java has certainly informed the way he composes but he does not go down that rocky road of ersatz Orientalism. In fact, his music seems squarely in the Western art music tradition in light of its electroacoustic setting. It reminds me of some of the wonderful dronal pieces composers used to do in the seventies, something that's fallen out of favor lately.

Steven's music has a lot of the hypnotic, calming character of some New Age music, but it also has edges—edges that keep you awake and make the experience worth following. But it's not hard work; it's beautiful to listen to, and get lost in. —Ingram Marshall, April 1997, Hamden, CT

Tracks 1, 2, 4, 5 & 9 were realized at Sound Sound, Seattle, WA. Tracks 3, 5, 6, 7 & 8 were realized at the Contemporary Music Program of the College of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM. Final mastering and CD-R preparation of the original release were graciously provided by David Dunn. Re-release mastering by Steven M. Miller.

Thanks to the following for direct and indirect support of this project: Tom Fallat (Sound Sound), David Dunn, Ingram Marshall, Michael J. Saul, Jim Lawrence (CSF Dean's Faculty Research Grants 1996 & 1997), Tom Alexander & The Seattle City Gamelan, Jarrad Powell & Gamelan Pacifica. Special thanks to Bapak Ng. Tarnopangrawit (almarhum), teacher and friend.

The original release of this disc was greatly assisted by faculty research grants from the College of Santa Fe.



DISCS 2 & 3

At the Outpost

Improvisations for Instruments, Sounds, and Electronics

STEVEN M. MILLER

with

DINO J.A. DEANE

STEVE PETERS

DAVID DUNN

PETER GORDON

STEVEN FELD

Recorded live in concert at the Outpost Performance Space, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

DISC 2 - MAY 10, 1997

- 1 **Solo 1** (Bells) (for David Mahler) 16:38
- 2 **Duo 1** 10:02
- 3 **Trio 1** 8:23
- 4 **Solo 2** (Suling) (for Ingram Marshall) 8:59
- 5 **Duo 2** 9:34
- 6 **Trio 2** (Becoming...) 11:59
- 7 **Quartet** (Create A Space) 8:03

DISC 3 - FEBRUARY 21, 1998

- 1 **Duet 1** 18:02
- 2 **Duet 2** 12:42
- 3 **Quartet** 7:33
- 4 **Duet 3** 8:27

These live concert recordings are an outgrowth of my continuing interest in the hybrid musical resources of acoustic sound with electronic signal processing. The rich timbral, textural, and spatial possibilities are, for me, fascinating and lead to some of my most satisfying musical moments. The ensembles, with little or no rehearsal and on our first live performances together, provided me with moments of untold wonder, and constantly surprised, cajoled, and seduced me into making music in a most unselfconscious manner.

Another of my interests represented here is that of improvisation: thinking on one's feet before an attentive and discriminating audience. There's nothing quite like it to put musicians in that quality of being where rare occurrences of intention, awareness, and responsiveness are mingled, if sometimes only fleetingly, into a collective music making that transcends its individual participants. Coupled with this is a profound interdependence, at least in the contexts presented here, between the acts of producing and transforming sound. In the hybrid system employed here—comprised of instruments/sound sources, microphones, mixers, signal processors, and loudspeakers—sound producers have no control over the processing and transformation of "their" sound, and the sound processor has no control over the sounds input into the system. In such a setting, completely independent action is minimized and collective responsibility for the aural result is maximized. None of the individual participants are in control of the aggregate—all share in influencing the unfolding improvisation. In live musical performance this is a socio-political dynamic that is somewhat rare, going beyond even

that of traditional group improvisation. It's an aspect of this work that I have been particularly interested in developing.

These pieces are all improvisations—real-time compositions—by the respective performers. "Suling" and "Bells" are improvisations I have performed numerous times. Of the ensemble performances, only the pieces on the first disc entitled "Trio 2" and "Quartet" made use of any specific underlying structure, that being the text-based "scores" composed by myself for guiding the general overall development of non-specific instrumental/sound resources. The parenthetical titles of these pieces are those of the text-scores employed. The recordings are presented essentially "as is" with minimal intervention after the fact. They were mixed, with no overdubbing and minimal editing for mostly technical reasons, in the interest of preserving the sound and feel of the concert performances as much as possible. No additional processing or studio trickery was employed. What you hear is pretty much exactly what we did.

DISC 2 PERFORMERS

Solo 1 (Bells) (for David Mahler)
Steven M. Miller: *percussion, electronics*

Duo 1
David Dunn: *violin*
Steven M. Miller: *samples, electronics*

Trio 1
Dino J.A. Deane: *trombone, electronics*
David Dunn: *violin*
Steven M. Miller: *samples, electronics*

Solo 2 (Suling) (for Ingram Marshall)
Steven M. Miller: *Balinese suling (bamboo flute), electronics*

Duo 2
Dino J.A. Deane: *trombone, bass flute, electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *percussion, samples, electronics*

Trio 2 (Becoming...)
Peter Gordon: *soprano saxophone*
Dino J.A. Deane: *trombone, electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *electronics*

Quartet (Create A Space)
David Dunn: *violin*
Peter Gordon: *tenor saxophone*
Dino J.A. Deane: *bass flute, electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *samples, electronics*

DISC 3 PERFORMERS

Duet 1
Steve Peters: *suling gambuh, voice, accordion, electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *suling Bali, percussion, samples, electronics*

Duet 2
Steve Peters: *trees, assorted percussion, violin, electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *percussion, electronics*

Quartet
Dino J.A. Deane: *trombone*
Steven Feld: *trombone*
Steve Peters: *electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *electronics*

Duet 3
Steve Peters: *voice, electronics*
Steven M. Miller: *Prophet-5, samples, electronics*

All compositions by the respective performers except "Becoming..." and "Create A Space," composed by Steven M. Miller and arranged by the performers.

All pieces on Disc 2 © 1997 Steven M. Miller/Tauffan Music (BMI).

All pieces on Disc 3 © 1998 Steve Peters & Steven M. Miller/Tauffan Music (BMI).

Disc 2 recorded by Shawn Lee.
Disc 3 recorded by Steve Peters.

Produced, mixed, and edited by Steven M. Miller.
Special thanks to Tom Guralnick and everyone at the Outpost, and Steve Peters/Nonsequitur, Inc.



DISC 4

Glass Piece

STEVEN M. MILLER

1 **Glass Piece**
(for Annea Lockwood) 1998, 71:27

Multitracked time-stretched and pitch-shifted transformations of one track ("Mini Mobile") from Annea Lockwood's *The Glass World* album. Composed in 1997 for an ambient outdoor sound installation during the 2nd Annual Santa Fe International Festival of Electro-Acoustic Music (1998).

Composed, performed, and recorded by Steven M. Miller, © 1998 Steven M. Miller/Tauffan Music (BMI). Produced, mixed, and recorded at the College of Santa Fe Contemporary Music Program.



DISC 5

SlowFire

STEVEN M. MILLER

- 1 **SlowFire**
(for Marla Redcorn-Miller) 2003, 15:49
- THREE PIECES FOR CHRIS MANN** 1996
- 2 **Free Rain** 0:59
- 3 **Interruptions** 1:06
- 4 **Fire Crackers/Far Apart** 0:59
- 5 **In the Absence of the Sacred** 1997, 11:04
- 6 **Pulse Canon** (for Larry Polansky) 2003, 3:20
- 7 **The Flow of Time**
(for Willa Roberts) 2000, 5:00
- 8 **Pohon Berbunga**
(for David Dunn) 1998, 9:59
- 9 **Twin Canon** (for Larry Polansky) 2003, 9:50

All pieces © 1996–2003 Steven M. Miller/Tauffan Music (BMI).

These works are a result of my continuing interest in sonic transformation, exploration of perceptual phenomena, and immersion in sound worlds on the cusp of motion and stasis. On an intellectual level, this manifests as sonic explorations of the perception of time, timbre, and form. Aesthetically, this typically has resulted in pieces seemingly unconcerned with the passage of time, without a significant degree of overt drama or narrative devices, and without reliance on either traditional formal structures or structural devices such as harmonic progression, key and modulation, or instrumentation. Alternatively, the focus has been

shifted to structures and shapes delineated by timbre, density (horizontal as well as vertical), and texture. Formal space is mapped out as a function of parametric change in these and other sonic features. As such, gesture, development, and transformation are the primary engines of structure and form.

Another prominent aspect of these pieces is their relatively organic and natural sonic character. I find that one of the characteristics I'm most interested in developing in a piece is a sense of what I term "organic inevitability." Regardless of the acoustic or synthetic origins of a set of timbres or textures, the sense that a piece's progression feels like it could happen naturally, without too much overt human intervention, is an attractive idea. Whether change is smooth and continuous or abrupt and discontinuous, anticipated or surprising, I find myself striving for a sense that what is happening is natural, organic, and inevitable. It should, on some level, "make sense," even if that sense is intuitive and difficult to articulate.—Steven M. Miller, Pecos, NM, July 2004

SlowFire Transformations of Bartok and Ligeti using computer-based processing techniques. A three-part structure traces out the slowly shifting resonances concealed within a single fragment each from Bartok's first string quartet, first movement, Ligeti's second piano etude, then the combination of both. The title is meant to evoke a slow, almost inevitable, progression with an organic, natural quality to the unfolding. This piece is a wedding present for my wife.

Three Pieces for Chris Mann Fragments of the original input sound file, that of the poet's voice, are

de/re-constructed in various ways and recombined to paraphrase textural aspects of the original. Each of these short pieces is based on separate granular deconstruction of the first ten seconds of the original sound file. The primary idea was to explore aspects of the surface texture, timbral complexity, and spatial density created by the fragmented phonemes.

Previously released on the compact disc *The Frog Peak Collaborations Project*, Frog Peak Music, 1996.

In The Absence of the Sacred takes its title from a rather remarkable book by Jerry Mander that deals with the current state of a culture of technology run rampant and its ill effects on the indigenous peoples of the earth. Starting with snippets of ethnographic recordings as source material, phase vocoding (time stretching) and convolution are used to bring out textural and timbral features not otherwise apparent. The three-part structure takes the listener progressively deeper into the embedded textures, and further into technologically altered sonic environments.

Pulse Canon is a companion piece, of sorts, to "Twin Canon." The overall effect in "Pulse Canon" is of a gradually thickening texture that then begins to take on a gradually rising pitch. This is achieved via a mensuration canon of logarithmically decreasing time intervals. **Twin Canon** is a tightly organized exploration of harmonically proportioned pitch, timbre, and time. The pure tuning ratios coupled with the purely related harmonic spectra of overlapping notes results in spectral fusion on a massive scale. Again, the technique of mensuration canon contributes to an overall texture of increasing density and complexity. In formulating

the ideas and techniques for these pieces, I am greatly indebted to the work of both James Tenney and Larry Polansky. In particular their academic and creative work, separately as well as together, in formal perception and experimental tuning provided a basis from which to proceed. "Twin Canon" also clearly owes a debt to the work of Conlon Nancarrow. Both pieces are dedicated to Larry Polansky. They were conceived as part of his *DIY Canons* project, on which further information can be found at <http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/fvc/fvc13.htm>. They were composed entirely in Csound in November & December 2003.

Both pieces were previously released on the compact disc *DIY Canons*, Pogus Productions, 2005.

The Flow of Time A short piece—a meditation of sorts—on the highly subjective nature of the sensation of the passage of time. It is composed entirely from one short fragment of my recorded voice uttering those immortal words, "Testing 1, 2, 3..." Using granular synthesis, phase vocoding (time stretching, pitch transposition), spectral extraction, and multi-track mixing, a sound-world is evoked which illustrates a poem I had written previously, by the same title.

Previously released on the compact disc *AlbuZERXque*, Vol. 3, Zerx Records, 2000.

Pohon Berbunga This piece is an experiment in constant sonic motion, dedicated to David Dunn. The basic structural principle is rather simple: a very general progression from complete independence between simultaneous events to increasing degrees of correlation on various levels. This occurs—with a number of exceptions, deviations, and

regressions—across five 2-minute intervals. The title translates from the Indonesian as "Flowering Tree." It references a piece of David's entitled "Wildflowers" while evoking the burst of color and noisy profusion of blossoms of a bloom-laden tropical plant.

Previously released on the compact disc *AlbuZERXque*, Vol. 8, Zerx Records, 2001.

Thanks to: Marla Redcorn-Miller, Gregory Anderson, Mark Weber/Zerx Leisure Products, Michael J. Saul, Larry Polansky/Frog Peak Music, Al Margolis/Pogus Productions, David Dunn, the Contemporary Music Program at the College of Santa Fe.

All pieces were composed on Macintosh computers using a variety of commercial and non-commercial software packages and programming languages, including Csound, Max/MSP, Pro Tools, Sound Hack, Argeiphontes' Lyre, Curve Control GM, Cloud Generator, and Peak.

A Few Words about Steven M. Miller

Steven was my student a very long time ago, at the Mills College Center for Contemporary Music. The way I remember him from almost 25 years ago is that he was "into" everything: gamelan, performance, tuning, recording, improvisation, and computer music. And he was into each of these things deeply, doing them at a high level, with a tremendous amount of passion. He was one of the strongest gamelan musicians and composers working with Lou Harrison and Jody Diamond. He worked closely with David Rosenboom and myself on early live interactive computer music systems, writing his own code in some very strange and new environments that often made other students' eyes glaze

over. He was an energetic participant in seemingly every community concert, project, recording (he quickly became one of the “go to” engineers for everyone else at the CCM), and event, including several of the ensembles initiated by Anthony Braxton. In a way, Steven was the kind of young composer/performer/researcher that Mills, in those days, was designed for: a musical next generation that no longer needed to make superficial distinctions between things like world music, live electronics, tuning theory, improvisation. He (and a very few others) saw it simply as “the musical world.”

The nice thing is that Steven, and this says a lot, is still that same guy, albeit a little older, far more experienced, and doing his work at a much higher level. He has, in the face of a world that is not particularly amenable to working without distinctions (that’s putting it mildly), not made them. And with a remarkable lack of preclusion he’s somehow managed to sculpt a rich, vital creative world for himself, looking forward. But perhaps more impressively, and even more rewarding to an old teacher (and now colleague and friend), he has helped create a similar world for others. His accomplishments in Santa Fe over the last decade are not just benevolent for his students, and his own work, but for the music world at large.

Steven possesses a rare gift, and one that no musician should take for granted: enthusiasm. We all start out with it I suppose, but every step of the way, every day of our life, we are challenged to keep it by a world that couldn’t care less about ideas, poetry, music, community. There is no greater compliment I could pay to Steven M. Miller, and to his music (which speaks so eloquently for itself on this recording), than that his passion for

new ideas, for sound, for music as a way of life, seems identical to when I first met him.
—Larry Polansky, Hanover, NH, 7 September 2006

Guisés, Scapes Like the Wizard of Oz, the composer who uses synthetically produced or modified sound is mostly in the business of faking it. Who’s hiding behind that computer? It’s the sonic illusionist, claiming that this is really that.

While composers who work with traditional instruments/voices manipulate sounds in various and clever ways, for the effort required to make a flute howl like a french horn, or a cello bleat like a trumpet, the returns are small. Of course, instruments can create a sound impression. What trombonist hasn’t imitated a train horn or a barking dog, for instance? What pianist hasn’t drummed on the keyboard? But our ears aren’t easily fooled. Traditionally, the art of orchestration/instrumentation/arranging is not founded on an instrument trying to sound like something it’s not. (The exception among traditional instruments may be the pipe organ, the first imitator, synthesizer, faker. From Angle Horn, Blockflöte, and Cornetto through Zymbelstern, pipe organs, I’d guess, have always been about being some other instrument. Though mixtures and mutations are specific to the queen of instruments, there really is no pipe organ stop labeled Pipe Organ.) (Interestingly, there are synthesizers with presets labeled Synthesizer.) Synthetic sounds fit two general descriptions: those whose parent identity is obvious, and those whose original sound source has been disguised, even obliterated. The three pieces on Steven M. Miller’s *SlowFire* that reveal their sound source were all

created using purely electronic sounds. After more than fifty years of exposure to musical electronics, these sounds are old pals—we’d recognize them anywhere. Leaving aside for the moment Steven’s two Canons, the exotically titled “Pohon Berbunga,” out of all this CD’s wares, is most transparent of means. It consists of boilerplate electronic sine, sawtooth, and square waves, frequency modulated and pitch and amplitude portamentoed—a tip of the Stetson to a simpler time in synthetic music land. “Pohon Berbunga” is the pipe organ being the pipe organ.

The two Canons and “Pohon Berbunga” excepted, Steven doesn’t sound us what’s up his sleeve. But in his notes accompanying these pieces, the composer reveals the detailed ingredients of his musical recipes. Though probably not of essential value, it is good fun to know what sound wears what costume. The disguises and the modified sounds, however, are the attraction. Impressions of wind, water, fire, metal, and glass appear, in soundscapes wearing the dress of landscapes. Open throated birds and humans also inhabit Steven’s scenes. All these sounds ring elemental.

I’m not suggesting that Steven wants us to hear flames or finches. That’s what I hear. (He certainly doesn’t intend my own concrete imagery: the skeep of the El cornering Chicago’s Loop, to wax pathetically literal.) Turning one sound into another shows the work of a clever technician. But whether we know Steven’s sources or not, or whether we share some common sonic or visual imagery through his touch, these pieces resist the easy urge to exist for sound’s sake alone. The real work from Steven is the mysterious act of using the materials at hand to make pieces of music. Behind the computer, the

technician turns out to be a composer.

I don’t know what makes music music. The sounds in “SlowFire,” “In the Absence of the Sacred,” and “The Flow of Time,” interesting in themselves, give way to form-building that seems to signal real pieces. Persistent shapes appear. Ideas evolve and recirculate, get stubborn, have their say. Steven’s sounds are groomed into convincing structures and compelling compositions through his use of stereo space, cinematic close-ups, dissolves, and fades, and a playfield of dynamics so inviting you feel you could step inside, run a long distance. The larger scapes of this CD seem to embolden their intense, if less scenic, neighbors:

—A sumi brush scratches up “Three Pieces for Chris Mann.” A gesture, then music.

—“Pulse Canon” gradually, relentlessly saturates its silent canvas. Both concept and realization thrill.

—The perception tickling, time twisting “Twin Canon,” subtle and handsome, even attired in the three-piece suit of rigid methodology, affirms Steven’s tendency to show us how to construct substantial pieces with limited (though not simple!) sonic material.

Steven M. Miller rides the technology bronco, slings out his lasso with digital gesture, and drops a supple rope frame around the objects of his aural pursuit. Sonic scapes that follow—vistas, panoramas, headlands, outlooks—work on our ears. We don’t hear sources here. We experience transformations, revelations. Elemental sounds slip into memorable images. The pipe organ stars as itself, while this becomes that.

—David Mahler, Pittsburgh, PA, 26 September 2006



DISC 6

Recent Works

STEVEN M. MILLER

- 1 **Recirculations**
(for Steve Peters) 2002, 24:57
- 2 **Points of Origin**
(for Annea Lockwood) 2006, 18:38
- 3 **Recirculations II**
(for David Tudor) 2006, 12:08
- 4 **Motors**
(for Ty Constant and Peter Edwards) 2010, 17:05

Recirculations

(for Steve Peters) 2002

"Recirculations" stems from several interests of mine: architectural acoustics, soundscape studies, and the complex dynamic behavior of embedded feedback systems. The piece essentially acts to include the room resonances and the sounds made within (and sometimes outside) the performance space within a large network of cross-coupled feedback loops consisting of the room, multiple speakers and microphones, and signal processing within the computer. This hybrid network becomes a large-scale complex acoustic/analog/digital oscillator that exhibits characteristics of both deterministic and chaotic behavior. As well, it inextricably links the soundscape within the performance space with the actual sonic materials generated by the system itself—the piece and the sounding space are one and the same. The resultant form and sonic material

of a given performance are thus shaped by an interaction of the sonic character of soundscape, the architectural acoustics of the performance space, empirical intervention by the performer, the aleatoric nature of soundscape elements, complex multi-layered feedback in both the acoustic and electronic realms, and the transformative potential of the digital signal processing. "Recirculations" was premiered in August 2002 at the Outpost Performance Space in Albuquerque, NM.

Points of Origin

(for Annea Lockwood) 2006

A soundscape composition composed exclusively from field recordings made along the Pecos River and surrounding areas in New Mexico, this piece is an attempt to both expose and investigate the complex sonic environment to be found along the river and its surroundings. By recontextualizing sounds from the every-day world, we begin to hear them in new ways. Rather than reach into otherwise unavailable sonic terrain, the point is rather to recognize the extraordinary richness of sounds we typically find ourselves striving to ignore. Out of this, hopefully, comes a reassessment and re-evaluation of our sonic environment and an awareness of the need to listen more attentively wherever we are. The original recordings are edited, mixed, and layered; no signal processing or other manipulations are employed. This version is a stereo reduction of the original 5.1 surround-sound mix.

Recirculations II

(for David Tudor) 2006

This is the second in a series of compositions that explore the dynamic behaviors of complex embedded feedback systems—in this case, cross-linked and self-modulating digital delays and oscillators. Additionally, "Recirculations II" is concerned with ideas of recycled and interlinked memories. Regeneration coupled with degeneration over time links input to output across multiple intersecting pathways. This recording is from the premier performance on 8 December 2006.

Motors

(for Ty Constant and Peter Edwards) 2010

Motors is an algorithmic drone and timbre study. The timbre starts with both air microphone and contact microphone recordings of two different kinds of electro-mechanical motors. The first was a malfunctioning and rather intermittently noisy air conditioner, while the second was a compressor motor attached to a beer keg cooler.

In both cases they were recorded to four channels: a stereo pair of air microphones and two individual (mono) clip-on contact mics. From there they were processed with multiple different chains of delays and reverbs—the chains each configured uniquely and running in parallel. The idea was to bring out different timbral characteristics of the original recordings via the different processing combinations.

The algorithmic aspect came with automated mixing of the original and processed versions. I divided the length of each recording into simultaneously 3, 5, and 7 equal length segments and then smoothly faded the different processing channels (or versions) in and out over those time segments. The result is the constantly changing mix among the original and differently processed versions.

All pieces composed, performed, and recorded by Steven M. Miller, © 2002–2006 Steven M. Miller/Tauffan Music (BMI), except track 3 recorded by Paul Brown. Produced, mixed, and recorded at the College of Santa Fe Contemporary Music Program.



DISC 7 (DVD)

Scenes of Inquiry

STEVEN M. MILLER and video artist MICHAEL J. SAUL* have shared a collaborative artistic vision since meeting in 1987. The short videos they've produced together have engaged and challenged viewers at film festivals throughout the world.

*for more information, visit: www.michaelsaul.com

Morning Dance 1988, 10:00 Created from a childhood memory of first love and private obsession, "Morning Dance" became more of a lament to loss of innocence and beauty.

Dominus 1991, 13:00 Crafted from a local news story about a teen found dead in his backyard pool after a confrontation with his father over the boy's sexuality.

Hover 1996, 10:00 A gay, teen-aged vampire wallows in his self-imposed exile, while his savvy mother helps ensnare victims for him.

Don't Read Now 2006, 10:00 A three-panel video installation exploring the beauty and tragedy of youthful love letters.

BONUS FEATURES:

- Behind the Videos Documentary 16:00
- "Don't Read Now" Gallery Demo 5:00
- Trailer "True Love" 1:20

Fully-restored versions of Steven M. Miller's music:

- **Terra Incognita** (used in "Morning Dance")
- **The Shadow of the Mosque** (used in "Dominus")
- **The Grass is Singing** (used in "Hover")
- **Under the World Tree** (used in "Hover")
- **Zen** (used in "Don't Read Now")
- **SlowFire** (used in "True Love")



DISC 8

Music for Steven M. Miller

The concept behind this CD came originally from my idea to ask some of my friends and mentors if they would make music for my memorial service. Soon after I was diagnosed with ALS, I realized that one of the silver linings was that I would have the time to plan my passing. Since so much of my life has been about music and sound, I thought it would be nice to include some listening into a memorial service from composers that I have been close to and admired. I was very gratified when all of the composers I asked agreed to compose something for me. While discussions were underway to organize this anthology project, the suggestion was made to include these compositions as a frame for my own work, placing it in a larger artistic and aesthetic context.

Two of the original composers that I invited were Ingram Marshall and Larry Polansky, both of whom contributed pieces to be heard at the memorial but which are not included on this disc. Likewise, Pauline Oliveros contributed a text score that has yet to be realized and recorded. The printed score is included in this anthology (see page 35), and a recording of another previously unreleased work is heard on the CD.

I am deeply indebted to all of the composers represented here for their friendship and inspiration.
—Steven M. Miller, Santa Fe, 2014

1 ANNEA LOCKWOOD

Namaste 2014, 3:34

“Namaste” opens with my voice. It incorporates chorus waves and whistlers recorded by NASA’s RBS probes in conjunction with the University of Iowa’s Radio and Plasma Wave Group, then “Retanked by tanksounds.org in Rangeley, Colorado,” and also radio emissions from Saturn, shifted down into the audio range by a factor of 44 and recorded by the NASA Cassini spacecraft’s Radio and Plasma Wave Science instrument in 2003. A sei whale, recorded by Arthur Newhall at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, accompanies Saturn. I am grateful for permission to use these sounds.

2 DAVID DUNN

Sunya 1 2014, 12:19

While on its surface this recording appears to be merely a representation of the soundscape that a listener might encounter at the Florida Everglades, it is actually a radical compression of time and space that no individuated consciousness could bear witness to. Through hundreds of edits, the recording is a description of the Everglades as a living meta-object—something inconceivable in its complexity and density—that is compacted through a compositional regime. The sounds come from multiple locations and multiple positions in time, juxtaposing the sounds of insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals through the use of many different kinds of microphones and custom-built audio transducers. Some of these sounds—such as the ultrasonic signals produced by bats—must be made audible to our human ears through alterations of their frequency. Others must be highly amplified to become audible or

collected in places—such as underwater—where our ears were not designed to go. Overall the work seeks to evoke a sense of the deep web of life that we are part of and to create an experience more akin to what the edge of science is telling us: that our sense of time as a flow from past to future is a perceptual illusion from which we cannot escape. The work was written for and is dedicated to Steven M. Miller.

3 STEVE PETERS

Composite Memory 2014, 8:11

Steven M. Miller: *suling (Javanese bamboo flute)*

Steve Peters: *Javanese gongs, electronic processing, field recordings*

This piece is based on several fond memories I have of Steven. The low, rolling gong drone was extracted from “Agung” (2000), the first piece I made on a computer after he tutored me in the basics of ProTools. The struck gong and *suling* are extracted from “Planctus” (1994), composed for Gamelan Encantada, an ensemble in which we both played. Steven played *suling* on that piece, and when I asked if there were any particular rules for *suling* playing he said, “Birds, basically.” I’ve here used fragments of his playing, processed in a manner I believe he would appreciate and mingled with woodland birds on the Olympic Peninsula.

4 GREGORY TAYLOR

Tempat Bermain 2014, 5:56

This homage to my friend Steven M. Miller (its title is the Indonesian translation for the word “playground”) lives—like much of his own work—between the phonographic world and generative structures based on the Indonesian musics that he

and I have studied and love. Its source is a recording of a Dutch school playground in Utrecht, which is then subjected to various kinds of mappings and processes that generate the tonal material and the little sequence fragments of pitches that, once looped and otherwise modified, become *bonangs*, *sarons*, and *pasindhen*-like materials. Given his enormous affection for his daughter Lanora, it just seemed right to begin with the joy and liveliness of children and follow on from there as mindfully as possible. May it be worthy.

Thanks for everything, Steven.

5 DINO J.A. DEANE

Turnstile 2013, 5:59

Dino J.A. Deane: *iPad/sampler*
Recorded and processed in real time by Cookie Marengo. Captured in DSD by Patrick O’Conner at OTR Studios, 10 December 2013.

For Steven and his love of both gamelan and granular synthesis.

6 CHRIS BROWN

Avatar 2007, 6:05

I based this quasi bossa-nova piano piece on the chord changes from a Caetano Veloso piece called “Dada.” Each part in the texture was recorded separately, using lots of mutes, preparations, and percussion from inside the piano. Electronic processing was applied heavily as part of each instrumental track. The tempo accelerates gradually, and as it comes alive this piano avatar staggers under its own weight, never quite secure as a complete life form, but still dancing its own fragility.

7 PAULINE OLIVEROS

Pauline’s Solo 2008, 16:12

Recorded in Romanischer Sommer, Menoretinkirche, Köln, Germany.

Listening to this space I sound the space. I dedicate this listening to Steven’s listening. Listening to my listening and Steven’s listening I make this music here and now with the assistance of all that there is.

8 DAVID MAHLER

All the World 2014, 8:17

David Mahler: *Piano*

David Mahler, Frances Dannenberg,

Julie Hanify, Susan Krauss, Cynthia Magistro,

Marianne Novy: *Voices*

Music comes and goes. All of us, too. “All the World” attempts both coming and going at the same time. Though a newly minted piece, this work for voices and manipulated piano behaves like it comes from the time when I first met Steven, a time when sound was everything. Steven’s big embrace of the world of sound, and the world herself, instructed me, stays with me. This house-made tribute to a wise and passionate friend and probing composer was saved by the technical insight of Steve Peters, to whom I am grateful.

9 MAGGI PAYNE

Beyond 2014, 6:25

Beyond the boundaries of earth to the vastness of the universe.

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Music for Steven M. Miller not included on the CD

LARRY POLANSKY

ויעל (V'ya'al) (and he ascended)

For Steven M. Miller

"V'ya'al" is a non-coincidental, or more precisely, a minimally coincidental canon for nine instruments. The voices are in integral tempo ratios, whose canonic entry points are determined by their relationship to the leading voice (in this case, the violin, which is an 11th harmonic) in such a way that they all end together (as in my four voice canons). The ratios are all relative to the 11th harmonic (of C), and all are primes (2-3-5-7-9-11-13-17-19-23), though some of the ratios are inverted so that the tempi will be less extreme.

Each voice plays only one pitch, the harmonic corresponding to the tempo value. Thus the shortest (fastest) voice is also the lowest (C, played by the piano, the last to enter, which is 2/11ths of the leading voice). Each voice is tuned to its prime (thus, the 11th is 49¢ flat of 12ET). Although the pitches are in the octave relationships of the harmonic series, any voice may play another octave at any time if it fits comfortably in the instrument's range.

A computer program wrote a rhythmic configuration for the leading voice, canonically identical in the other voices, scaled by their tempo ratios. That configuration is chosen to engender the minimal number of simultaneities between any two voices. Some other constraints were made for the

configuration to ensure playability (only duple values, with the smallest being the 16th note), and for formal reasons (the density of the leading voice is determined by a "half-cosine" probability function; a minimal spacing between events). The number of notes in the voice (the same for each) was also a factor—the program attempted to reconcile having the most events possible with the minimum ratio of simultaneities. When there are simultaneities, the musicians are asked to play some simple noise or resonant sound (using, if they like, small handheld bells, or their voices, or anything), from a collection of 8 such sounds, each corresponding to one of the other instruments—the one with which the simultaneity occurred.

Steven's interest in and beautiful compositional work with the four voice canon idea inspired me to extend that to the form of this piece. The idea of resolving a set of difficult problems (as many notes as possible, many instruments, a specific rhythmic quantization, and a "form") seemed appropriate to me in this dedication. All of us face, in our lives, with whatever courage, dignity, and ingenuity we can muster, multiple configurations of obstacles to the lives we wish, try, and imagine to live. We make allowances, devise compromises, and just muddle along as best we can. Like the implausibility and ideological purity of a complex (non-tessellated) non-coincidental canon, in which each event is uniquely heard, most of us do, at best, a mediocre job of attaining the kind of existence we might hope for. There are just too many constraints—solving one creates another, often unexpected.

When Steven got sick, and asked me for a piece, I was appreciative that he helped me know how

to act. As he often did, he found a way to make it easier for a friend, even as life found new ways to make things difficult for him.

“V’ya’al” is composed in simple acknowledgement of Steven’s bravery, strength, and humanity, without kidding myself that something so hard can be made any easier.

—Larry Polansky, Santa Cruz, CA, 10 October 2014

Personnel (with accompanying harmonic numbers):

Chris Brown: *piano* (2)

Giacomo Fiore: *guitar* (3)

Monica Scott: *cello* (5)

Kyle Bruckmann: *english horn* (7)

Benjamin Kreith: *violin* (11)

Dianne Grubbe: *flute* (13)

Amy Beal: *synthesizer* (17)

Tom Dambly: *trumpet* (19)

Erik Ulman: *violin* (23)

Larry Polansky: *conductor*

Recorded by Chloe Stamper in the Mills College Concert Hall, 28 September 2014. Thanks to Maggi Payne, Chris Brown, and Matt Ingalls (of SFSound) for making this project possible.

INGRAM MARSHALL

Escape for piano with digital delay processing is based on an excerpt from **Alcatraz**, a visual/audio piece made in collaboration with photographer Jim Bengston.

PAULINE OLIVEROS

A Gathering of Voices for Steven M. Miller
(page 35)

A GATHERING OF VOICES FOR STEVEN M. MILLER

MANY PEOPLE are gathered together at first silently and then to sing for Steven M. Miller at a location out-of-doors or in-doors. The crowd is large, diverse and inclusive.

ANYONE in the crowd can start humming or singing softly at any time. Others join and spread the singing around the crowd until all are resonating and increasing the volume of the singing.

TWO OR MORE large acoustic megaphones travel hand to hand through the crowd from person to person from opposite sides of the gathering. The megaphones are used to increase the volume and resonance of each participating solo voice. The first voice heard through a megaphone starts a few minutes after the singing has established throughout the crowd.

EACH PERSON that takes a megaphone aims toward the center of the crowd and will mostly sing and sometimes say a phrase through the megaphone louder than the sound of the crowd of singing voices.

ANYONE in the crowd who hears a phrase from a person with a megaphone will attempt to join that phrase with his/her own voice or otherwise continue singing. When the phrase ends each person continues singing as before until another phrase from a person with a megaphone is perceived and joined.

THE CROWD singing continues until the megaphones are moved beyond the edges of the crowd with no more phrases and there is a return to silence.

—PAULINE OLIVEROS, 20 APRIL 2014, EASTER SUNDAY

Steven Michael Miller (1965–2014)

was a singular creative talent as a composer and musician who oversaw the critical development of the unique Contemporary Music Program at the College of Santa Fe (now Santa Fe University of Art and Design). He completed his undergraduate education at Evergreen State College and later earned an MFA from Mills College. As a Fulbright Scholar, he studied the traditional and contemporary music of Indonesia in Java and remained active as a scholar and performer of this music as well as other world music traditions throughout his life. In addition to his musical activities, he maintained an avid interest in the fields of acoustic ecology, audio recording and production, new media technology development, photography, and ethnography, contributing diversely and substantially to these (and other) areas of study.

Prior to his duties as Director of the Contemporary Music Program, Steven taught at the Alabama State University School of Music, and most recently was Associate Professor of Sonic Arts at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at the National University of Singapore. In addition to these full-time academic positions, he was internationally active as a composer, lecturer, and guest artist with appearances and performances throughout North America, Central America, Asia, and Europe. His music was distributed through multiple CDs and his writings were widely published in academic journals, the popular press, and online. He and his family returned to Santa Fe in February 2014 after his diagnosis of ALS.

Steven's work as a composer is distinguished by its highly creative use of electronic music technologies towards the exploration of novel aspects of sound as sensorial and perceptual phenomena. This was achieved through analog and digital processing of prerecorded sound material and the algorithmic computer generation of original sounds. An inspired musical improviser, he used these same electronic technologies to do live processing of improvising performers to explore music as a unique form of social dynamic. His music is characterized by its powerful sonic presence, often accompanied by a sensual, almost exotic, beauty. Steven's music never subscribed to a particular school of musical composition but instead arose from a deep intellectual engagement with multiple streams of musical thought that were allowed to converge creatively.

Steven was a passionate advocate for new music through his co-hosting of the KUNM radio show, "Other Voices, Other Sounds" for eight years as well as his producing the Annual Santa Fe International Festival of Electroacoustic Music in Santa Fe for twelve years. His students will remember him as an inspired and dedicated educator who approached teaching with an extraordinary capacity for rigor, depth, and incisive intellect. Remembered by his friends as a wonderfully generous and joyful person who loved to engage in intelligent dialogue with a delightful sense of humor, Steven was capable of meeting challenges with a profound integrity that was always of service to the community of fellow artists and educators.

—David Dunn, 12 October 2014

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TO LEARN MORE ABOUT STEVEN M. MILLER'S WORK VISIT:
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