

Department of Music | Stanford University

CCRMA

presents

# Winter Concert

electroacoustic music

CCRMA Stage | Thursday, February 17, 2011, 8:00 pm

# CONCERT PROGRAM

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*a program spanning several generations of CCRMA composers*

**Piece of Mind** (1995), by Celso Aguiar

**Fetish Object** (2010), by Chris Burns

**Love in the Asylum** (1981), by Michael McNabb

- I. Mad as Birds  
*illusorio*  
*allegro ridendo*  
*accelerando perpetuamente*
- II. Pirouette  
*vivace*
- III. The Magician's Daughter  
*inquieto*  
*amoroso*  
*carosello*  
*lontano*

**Quest (Búsqueda)** (1986), by Fernando Lopez-Lezcano

**I'm late** (1989), by Bill Schottstaedt

**That which is bodiless is reflected in bodies** (2005), by Matthew Burtner

*please turn off all your electronic devices*

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Piece of Mind** (1995), 2 channels, 7'56

Piece of Mind is about violence, and about fun... in higher doses than we allow ourselves in our daily lives. "Fun is dangerous," I was told in America. So, this piece is about the violence of fun or the fun of violence (as you wish). It is irresponsibly uneconomical when it opens the Pandora's box to myriads of incongruent sounds to obtain its congruency, collapsing and devouring its own past. While the piece itself operates in a continuum between two particular but complementary sound processing techniques, a blend of computer "musique concrète" and powerful spectral modeling synthesis (SMS), bell and cymbal timbres are interpolated with fragments of singing voice ("Tres cosas hay en la vida..."), exemplifying the transformation of conscientiousness in process. IFFT algorithms for additive synthesis were recreated from very scarce literature, and all the stages in the elaboration of the piece were executed on a NeXT computer with the set of Lisp tools developed at CCRMA.

**Celso Aguiar** was born in Palo Alto, California and grew up in Brazil in the city of Salvador, Bahia. He studied composition under the Swiss-Brazilian composer Ernst Widmer, becoming interested in electroacoustic music. He came to study at CCRMA as the result of a fellowship granted by the Brazilian government.

*Celso Aguiar was at CCRMA in the 1990s.*

### **Fetish Object** (2010), 2 channels, 9'26

In 2008, I started teaching myself to play electric guitar. (Thanks to Thomas Gaudynski for both inspiration and the loan of an instrument). My technique is, to put it nicely, idiosyncratic; rather than trying to figure out traditional chords and patterns, I see the guitar as a

highly amplified percussion instrument. *Fetish Object*, made for Luc Vanier's choreography, uses several recordings of my guitar improvisations as its source material. Those recordings were then sliced into thousands of tiny fragments (as short as ten milliseconds) using custom software, and reassembled into a soundscape that transcends the possibilities of the physical instrument. *Fetish Object* is a window into the spaces the guitar occupies in my imagination.

**Christopher Burns** is a laptop improviser and a composer of instrumental chamber music. His works explore simultaneity and multiplicity: textures and materials are layered one on top of another, creating a dense and energetic polyphony. Both electronic and acoustic music are influenced by Christopher's work as a computer music researcher. The gritty, rough-hewn sonic materials of his laptop instruments are produced through custom software designs, and the idiosyncratic pitch and rhythmic structures of his chamber music are typically created and transformed through algorithmic procedures. His most recent projects emphasize multimedia and motion capture, integrating performance, sound, and animation into a unified experience.

*Chris was around at CCRMA until 2003.*

### **Love in the Asylum** (1981), 4 channels, 14'01"

*Love in the Asylum* is a love song to the calculated insanity and spontaneous magic that one must sometimes call upon in order to live in this strange universe of ours. It features an orchestra of familiar instrumental and vocal sounds, new sounds drawn from the imagination, and—perhaps most expressively—sounds that fluidly shift between the two. The work, which critic Paul Lehrman called "one of the most devastatingly beautiful pieces of electronic music I have ever heard", is built of two psychological layers. Foremost is a layer of cheerful confidence and exuberance, colored and occasionally

overpowered by a dark emotional undercurrent of anxiety and psychological imbalance.

All sounds in *Love in the Asylum* were synthesized except for the laughter and the player calliope music. It includes a number of musical quotations, including quotations from other works of electroacoustic music. The spatial sound paths at the beginning of the first movement are from *Turenas* (1972) by John Chowning, who was a primary mentor, and influenced McNabb's decision to specialize in electroacoustic music and performance. *Love in the Asylum* premiered on November 2, 1981, at the Monday Evening Concert Series in Los Angeles.

This version of the piece was resynthesized from the original Samson Box binary control file through a Samsom Box software emulator written by Bill Schottstaedt. The sound quality of this rendering is much higher than the original tapes used in the 1980s.

**Michael McNabb** is a composer, performer, installation artist and computer music veteran. He has received awards from the Prix Ars Electronica, the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts, the Bourges Electroacoustic Music Festival, and the League of Composers /ISCM. McNabb holds a doctorate in Music Composition from Stanford University, where he studied at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics with John Chowning and Leland Smith. He is also senior Silicon Valley leading-edge technology consultant, V.P. of Technology at AquaMinds Software, the former manager of Sound and Music Software at NeXT Computer, and author of the real-time audio/MIDI performance application *Fantasia*. His current work focuses on media-enhanced electroacoustic musical performance and interactive installation art.

*Michael was around at CCRMA in the 1970s.*

**Quest (Búsqueda)** (1986), 16 channels, 8'00

The first part of the piece is a quest for something unknown. Tension slowly builds up until what is searched for is found. As usual, the end of the quest finds something that is very simple in comparison with the complexity of the search itself, and this new material is developed in the second part of the piece. The natural rhythms of beating sine wave play for a while until the memory of the quest returns and takes command of the discourse while the searcher and the searched-for object become one and end together. [fl 1987]

Quest was composed around 1985/86 in my Buenos Aires home studio. All the sounds in this piece were generated using a CZ101 digital synthesizer, one of the first affordable digital synthesizers, driven through MIDI from a Commodore 64 computer running the Dr T's sequencer package. It was recorded by bouncing tracks between my two open reel recorders with a total of 12 layers of CZ101's singing together. The piece was later re-recorded with much better equipment at LIPM (Laboratorio de Investigación y Producción Musical in Buenos Aires) and that stereo mix made it to a CD (and won a mention in Bourges in 1990).

This new (2011) "composer's cut" version of Quest was created from the first generation tapes I originally recorded at home. I recently digitized them and remixed/recreated the piece in a multichannel environment using Ardour, lots of tracks, automation and Ambisonics spatialization.

**Fernando Lopez-Lezcano** is a composer, performer, lecturer and computer systems administrator at CCRMA, Stanford University. He has been teaching and taking care of computing resources there since 1993, and created and maintains since 2001 the Planet CCRMA collection of open source sound and music packages for Linux. He has been involved in the field of electronic music since 1976 as a composer, instrument builder and performer, blurring the lines of his dual

background in music (piano and composition) and electronic engineering. His music has been released on CD and played in the Americas, Europe and East Asia. He taught at Keio University in Japan in 1992 and recently was the "Edgar Varese Guest Professor" at TU Berlin during the Summer 2008 semester.

*Fernando has been around since 1990.*

**I'm late** (1989), 2 channels, 3'30

I'm Late was written in 1989 using the Samson box. I didn't save the SAM file, so this version was made with Snd and the Scheme version of the fm violin. On CCRMA's current machines, the music could easily be computed in real-time, and I could do an interpretive dance at the same time, if I had any hope of staying awake at such a cruel hour, but for old time's sake, we play it from a sound file.

**Bill Schottstaedt** grew up in Oklahoma, got various degrees in music from Stanford, worked for a few years in the computer industry, then joined the staff of CCRMA, and rusted in place.

*Bill has been around forever.*

**That which is bodiless is reflected in bodies** (2005), 8 channels, 12'22

That which is bodiless is reflected in bodies (2005) explores notions of disembodiment through the combination of physical and virtual objects and environments. The title is derived from a principle put forth in Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* (ca. 200 AD), a large compendium of dream interpretations. The piece involves two areas of my research into computer sound synthesis: SOS (Spatio-Operational Spectral) Synthesis, and multichannel physical modeling synthesis applications.

That which is bodiless is reflected in bodies was composed for Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda Dome-room at the University of Virginia where it was premiered. The dome was re-imagined as a giant inverted

bowl, with the speakers placed along the upper balcony of the dome. Through computer modeling, the audience is physically immersed inside a giant virtual singing bowl corresponding to the dimensions of the real physical space. No sampled sounds were used in the piece, every sound being generated by a computer; but my hope is that the music is organic and alive, as if the room were breathing and dancing and ringing.

**Matthew Burtner** ([www.burtner.net](http://www.burtner.net)) is an Alaskan composer and sound artist specializing in concert music and interactive media. His work explores ecoacoustics, (dis)embodiment, and extended polymetric and noise-based systems. Burtner's music, often combining acoustic instruments and new technologies with video, dance or theatre, has been performed in major festivals and venues throughout the world. Since 2001 he has taught at the University of Virginia where he is Associate Professor with tenure, Director of the Interactive Media Research Group (IMRG), and Associate Director of the VCCM Computer Music Center.

*Matt was at CCRMA between 1998 and 2002.*

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No food, drink or smoking is permitted in the building. Cameras and other recording equipment are of questionable usefulness in an acousmatic concert. Please ensure that your pager, cellular phone and watch alarm are turned off.

**<http://ccrma.stanford.edu/concerts/>**

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