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Erika Tazawa
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ERIKA TAZAWA, PIANO

WILLIAM SUSMAN

1. Quiet Rhythms: Prologue and Action No. 9 (2010) 4:41

FRANCESCO DI FIORE

Miniature (2011)

2. Discovery 1:57
3. Hush 4:50
4. Sketch 1:51

DOUWE EISENGA

5. Theme from Wiek (2009) 10:50

WILLIAM SUSMAN

6. Quiet Rhythms: Prologue and Action No. 4 (2010) 6:17

MATTEO SOMMACAL

7. I Buried The Truth (2011)* 6:08

WILLIAM SUSMAN

8. Quiet Rhythms: Prologue and Action No. 18 (2012) 4:11

MARC MELLITS

Agu (2004)

9. I. Audio 3:11
10. II. Triumph of the Water Witch 1:31
11. III. You're a Fake! 9:09

TOTAL TIME: 54:42



Produced by William Susman

Recorded by James Zick at Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix, Arizona on May 28 & 29, 2014.

*Recorded at Ravensworks Digital, October 24, 2014.

Mastered by Michael Romanowski, San Francisco, CA

Piano provided by Ravenscroft Pianos, Phoenix, AZ

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Rhythm of Silence

Erika Tazawa, Piano

About the Music

WILLIAM SUSMAN: QUIET RHYTHMS

Prologue and Action No. 9 (2010)

Prologue and Action No. 4 (2010)

Prologue and Action No. 18 (2012)

Quiet Rhythms is an ongoing series of short piano pieces that are written in pairs consisting of a prologue and action. In creating each pair, the action is composed first and is syncopated and rhythmic. The prologue uses the same harmonic patterns of the action but is non-syncopated or “smooth”. Essentially, the prologue “preps” the pianist with the shape or “feel” of the chords. The action typically takes an harmonic pattern through various sorts of rhythmic cycles. Each book contains 11 prologues and actions and currently, there are four books.

FRANCESCO DI FIORE: MINIATURE (2011)

Discovery

Hush

Sketch

Miniature 2011 is a collection of compositions for solo piano and piano four-hands. Each week, I composed a piece and shared the score on my website. The project is a kind of music diary influenced by daily life.

The project started on January 1st 2011 and ended on December 31st, never missing a single appointment to compose each week, every Saturday, for a total of 53 piano pieces and 207 minutes of music.

Discovery 3/09 is the 18th miniature for solo piano, a sort of “perpetuum mobile” dedicated to the Space Shuttle Discovery, which landed 3/09/2011 after its last mission to the International Space Station. This piece was written exactly on 3/09/2011. Hush, the 30th miniature for solo piano, is a very intimate and introspective piece, written at a particular time when no word could be said, only silence, nothing but silence. Sketch, the 41st miniature for solo piano, is a brief sketch, impulsive and even neurotic, one of my little personal struggles with the piano keyboard.

DOUWE EISENGA: THEME FROM WIEK (2009)

Theme from Wiek (originally for piano and soprano saxophone) was part of the music for the performance Wiek (Rotor) from theatre director Boukje Schweigman. Wiek is a hypnotizing trip for the audience as well as the performers. Three female dancers find themselves sharing a circular area with the horizontally rotating blades of a wind turbine. The seated audience surrounds the space, allowing no chance of escape; the dancers must confront their situation. Feeble humans are compelled to enter into combat with forces far greater than their own, and the audience is made complicit in the inevitable outcome.

MATTEO SOMMACAL: I BURIED THE TRUTH (2011)

I Buried the Truth was written between December 2010 and February 2011, during my six-month stay at IHES (Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques), in the French village of Bures-sur-Yvette, southwest of Paris, with a final revision of the ending in December 2013. The first version of the piece was written with the benefit of a concert grand piano in the “pavillon de musique” surrounded by the wooded grounds of the institute.

The piece has three varied sections, plus a fourth one that starts as the reprise of the opening.

Each section elaborates, in different ways, on the same two main thematic ideas, save a brief melodic episode in the third section. The four sections relentlessly flow one into the other. Part of the melodic material in each section percolates up in subsequent ones in an accumulation process of rhythmic and harmonic shifts. “Not without toil will you get to the end”, wrote Girolamo Frescobaldi in his Toccata IX. The route may feature difficulties, sudden turns, climbs, and slopes. As we realize who we are along the way, we bury the truth deep inside ourselves.

MARC MELLITS: AGU (2004)

I. Audio

II. Triumph of the Water Witch

III. You're a Fake!

Agu was written in 2004 for Andrew Russo on a commission from the James S. Marcus Foundation and is inspired by three poems of the Romanian poetess Ioana Ierolim. Mellits has written that he wrote “Agu” just after his first daughter was born. He found himself composing this work with her sleeping in his lap while he was at the piano writing, hence, the two outer movements are quite gentle. The first movement juxtaposes the cold sounds of high-pitched, metal bells with the warm, low tones of the organ, finally giving birth to a pensive melody that winds the music down. Movement two is a rip-roaring, rock’n’roll piano etude. This study of massive repeated chords would have set Jerry Lee Lewis’ ‘Great Balls’ on fire.

Movement three was written with the composer’s infant daughter Mara sitting on his lap. This connection elicited music that is both pensive and pure, tinged with several moments of earnestness. The overall lyrical nature of Agu marked a strong departure from Mellits’ pre-2004 work. And, appropriately enough, the work’s title is a phonetic representation of Mara’s first ‘word’. -Andrew Russo



About the Artist

ERIKA TAZAWA, PIANO

There is nothing more inspiring than working with people who truly love what they do.

Recording on a Ravenscroft had been a dream of mine since I first discovered the company and its marvelous pianos in 2011; I also could not have found a better venue, the Musical Instrument Museum, and the recording engineer Jim Zick who knew exactly how to capture the elements.

The honest and beautiful music on this album are by the composers I admire, and I am humbled to be given the opportunity to share my vision of these works.

Hailed as “a superb collaborator, boldly undertaking the demanding keyboard parts with boundless technique, dynamic range, and expressive understanding” by American Record Guide, pianist Erika Tazawa has captured audiences internationally.

Winner of the prestigious Beverly Hills National Auditions in 2013, Tazawa is quickly gaining the reputation as a leading artist in the field of chamber music and vocal accompanying. Her performances have been featured in radio programs such as BBC London, National Public Radio’s Performance Today, and WSKG New York. A passionate advocate of new works, Tazawa enjoys partnerships with contemporary composers performing both solo piano and in ensembles.

About the Composers

FRANCESCO DI FIORE

Francesco Di Fiore, pianist and composer, was born in Palermo in 1966. He studied in Austria with Harald Ossberger, in the Czech Republic at the National Academy of Music with Peter Toperczer and, in Italy with Eliodoro Sollima and Bruno Canino. In 1986 he started his concert career performing hundreds of concerts worldwide. He appears regularly at international festivals presenting his compositions and also music by other contemporary composers.

Alongside music for piano, his compositions include chamber and orchestral music and film soundtracks. Much of his output includes music for the theatre, having composed more than 30 scores for theatre productions, both classical and contemporary.

He has collaborated with musicians such as Giovanni Sollima, Kim Sang-Fi, Damiano Binetti, Neil Campbell, Mario Crispi, ZoFo Duet and GliArchiEnsemble. A winner of numerous international competitions, his music has been performed internationally in Germany, Croatia, Finland, Spain, France, Romania, Slovakia, UK, Netherlands, USA and China.

DOUWE EISENGA

After a short career in pop music, the Dutch composer Douwe Eisenga studied composition in Groningen (NL). Firmly shaken by all sorts of contemporary composing techniques, it took a while until Eisenga found his own sound after his studies. Around 2001 this own musical sound developed rapidly, with pieces like Cloud Atlas, The Flood - Requiem and the Pianoconcerto. Since then, his music has spread all over the world, with a steady stream of concerts.

The music of Douwe Eisenga is anchored in the grooves of rock music. He makes no distinction between pop, baroque music or minimal music. All of these elements come together in music with maximum effect: Maximal Music.

MARC MELLITS

Marc Mellits is one of the leading American composers of his generation, enjoying hundreds of performances throughout the world every year, making him one of the most performed living composers in the United States. From Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, to prestigious music festivals in Europe and the US, Mellits' music is a constant mainstay on programs throughout the world. His unique musical style is an eclectic combination of driving rhythms, soaring lyricism, and colorful orchestrations that all combine to communicate directly with the listener. Mellits' music is often described as being visceral, making a deep connection with the audience. His formal training is from the Eastman School of Music, Yale School of Music, Cornell University, and Tanglewood.

Mellits' music has been played by major ensembles across the globe and he has been commissioned by groups such as the Kronos Quartet, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Duo Assad, Bang On A Can All-Stars, Eliot Fisk, Canadian Brass, & Nexus Percussion, among others. Mellits also directs and plays keyboards in his own unique ensemble, the Mellits Consort. On CD, there are over 50 recorded works of Mellits' music. Marc Mellits is on the music faculty of the University of Illinois-Chicago where he teaches Composition.

MATTEO SOMMACAL

Matteo Sommacal was born in Rome, Italy, in 1977. He splits his creative time between music and mathematics. After studying recorder and pursuing philological research of Renaissance and Baroque repertoire, he turned to contemporary music through working with Carmelo Piccolo, professor at the Conservatorio Statale di Musica "Gioachino Rossini". Since late 2000, he has served as the artistic director of the Italian chamber ensemble Piccola Accademia degli Specchi, that has premiered and recorded several of his compositions.

His works are regularly performed in Italy and at major festivals dedicated to contemporary music, as well as being featured in international radio shows, such as John Schaefer's New Sounds on WNYC in the U.S. and Concertzender in the Netherlands. His music has been released on Italian and international record labels, including KHA Records and Centaur Records. His scores are published by KHA and Casa Musicale Sonzogno.

As a scientist, his main research is in the field of nonlinear evolution equations and dynamical systems. After an MSc in Physics and a PhD in Mathematical-Physics at the International School for Advanced Studies in Trieste, he lived and worked in Italy, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom. He is currently Senior Lecturer in Applied Mathematics at Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

WILLIAM SUSMAN

William Susman belongs to the generation of American composers that came of age in the late twentieth century and received traditional academic training while remaining thoroughly engaged with popular music (in his case, jazz). Susman has written orchestral and chamber music for concert performance, as well as jazz and film scores. He has been the recipient of numerous awards, commissions and honors and his orchestral and chamber music has been widely performed in the U.S., Europe, China and Japan.

The New York Times calls his music "vivid, turbulent, and rich-textured" and All Music hails his album Scatter My Ashes as "the next developments in the sphere of minimalism". His music is notable for his integration of a variety of influences, including the Western classical tradition, Afro-Cuban music, free jazz, and several non-Western folk traditions. His music uses an array of musical devices from medieval isorhythm and hocket to Afro-Cuban clavé and montuño.