Tuesday, May 1, 1990
8:00 p.m. in Hamman Hall
PROGRAM

Music for Pieces of Wood (1971)  
Steve Reich  
(b. 1936)  
Continuum Percussion Quartet *

Toys in the Audience (1988)  
Ellsworth Milburn  
(b. 1938)  
Horn Song  
Simon Says  
The Little Engine that Could  
Thomas Bacon, horn  
Jonathan Benjamin, piano

Bricolage (1979)  
Peter Tod Lewis  
(1932-1982)  
Rain  
Chorale  
Rhythmus, harmonie, melodie  
Christopher Rose, percussion

INTERMISSION

Golden Petals (1985)  
William Thomas McKinley  
(b. 1938)  
Richard Nunemaker,  
soprano saxophone and bass clarinet  
Peter Herbert, double bass  
Pierrot Plus Ensemble  
David Colson, conductor

* Assisted by percussionist David Murray.
PIERROT PLUS ENSEMBLE

Amy Winn, flute
Paul Harris, clarinet
and alto saxophone
James Rodgers, bassoon
Thomas Bacon, horn
Richard Shaffer, trumpet
Aubrey Tucker, trombone

Scott Holshouser, piano
Christopher Rose, percussion
Richard Skains, percussion
Paul Orkiszewski, guitar
Tracy Rowell, double bass
David Colson, conductor

PROGRAM NOTES

Music for Pieces of Wood

Music for Pieces of Wood is notated for exactly what the title implies: five clave-like instruments of specific pitch. This piece is related to Reich's style of minimalism, but it exploits movement of the beat rather than pitch or tempo. The tempo never changes. A steady pulse is set by the first player followed by an ostinato pattern in the second. On top of this, fragments of patterns are set up, each beginning with one note. As notes are added, the listeners' concept of the beat becomes blurred. Although all three patterns form one cohesive whole, the beat becomes completely shifted. It is not until all three patterns fade away that the listener is re-introduced to the original ostinato pattern and can grasp what has always been there.

— Note by Christopher Rose

Toys in the Audience

Toys in the Audience (1988) is a three-part piece which uses audience participation as one of its important elements.

The first movement, Horn Song, establishes the musical material which pervades the work. In the second and third movements, Simon Says and The Little Engine that Could, the audience performs on toy instruments on cue from the soloist. Toys in the Audience was commissioned by Thomas Bacon for a children's music project. The Little Engine that Could is used with permission of Platt and Monk, Publishers.

— Note by Ellsworth Milburn
Bricolage: a work for solo percussion and tape in three movements. The first two movements, more or less conventional in design, are to be taken in a new unity with the complex third movement, just as the latter's diverse ideas, more or less coherent in themselves, add up to a larger formal whole, realizing, in effect, the musical experience of the work.

The tape segment provides the emotional climax of the work, its harmonies and timbres (a string orchestra played backwards an octave below recorded pitch), adding an unexpected "profondeur". This segment is then followed by the "Viguera's" march.

Like most of Bricolage, this march was composed in Mexico, its rather obsessive tune springing to mind one afternoon in 1974 on the dirt road between Oaxaca and Viguera, where we lived at the time. I don't remember the particular day in 1979 that moment of discovery, when the march, which had theretofore been considered inappropriate and even downright wrong for Bricolage, suddenly became appropriate and right, nor what aesthetic shifts in perception brought this about, but here we are dealing with the mysterious pleasures of composition.

— Note by Peter Tod Lewis

Golden Petals: a large-framed dramatic work originally conceived for the great Czech jazz bassist Miroslav Vitous and for the formidable saxophonist/clarinettist Les Thimmig. It was premiered at Boston's Jordan Hall by the Boston Musica Viva conducted by Richard Pittman, and subsequently performed by the same musicians at the Library of Congress during their 1985 American Festival.

In an extensive write-up and review of this work in Downbeat, Fred Bouchard points to the minimalist-improvisatory qualities in Golden Petals and the way in which the gestures unfold in a long-lined dramatically lyric manner. In fact, all of the gestures are precisely notated and only the illusion of improvisation is created directly from the notes themselves. The dramatic persona of the work owes much to the brilliant talents of its original performers, their sounds, and technical abilities; for example, the particular sound Miroslav Vitous achieves with his bass — the high harmonics and extensive bowing and lightning-fast pizzicatos. Throughout Golden Petals there are grand cadenzas and orchestral tuttis all blended into what the composer conceives as a lyrical singing-cantabile thread from beginning to end.

— Note by William Thomas McKinley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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