FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
at Rice University
November 4-11, 1991
celebrating American Music Week

Friday, November 8, 1991
8:00 p.m.
Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall

RICE UNIVERSITY

the Shepherd School of Music
PROGRAM

Three Scenes from “Streetcar” (1991)(Premiere) . . . . Paul English
Scene I
Scene II
Scene III
Kayce Glass . . Blanche
Van Robichaux . . Stanley
Max Dyer, cello
Paul English, piano

Estampie (1981) . . . . . . . . . . . . . Robert Xavier Rodriguez
I. Istanpitta Ghaetta
II. The Reversible Rag
III. Intermezzo
IV. Scherzo
V. The Slow Sleazy Rag
VI. Couple Action Rag
VII. Rimbombo
VIII. The Reversible Rag Reversed

Robert Xavier Rodriguez, conductor
Scott McAllister, clarinet
Max Dyer, cello
John Hendrickson, piano
Christopher Rose, percussion

INTERMISSION

Three Daily Songs . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Reginald R. Risón
Morning’s Revelation (1985)
Greet the Day (1985)
Night Comes (1986)

Melissa Givens, soprano
Neal Kurz, piano

Menil Antiphons (1989) . . . . . . . . . . . . . Ellsworth Milburn
for chamber ensemble
CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
for Menil Antiphons

Gabriel Sakakeeny, conductor

Aralee Dorough, flute
Scott McAllister, clarinet
William Ver Meulen, horn
Martha Thompson, horn

Kenneth Goldsmith, violin
Max Dyer, cello
Richard Brown, percussion
John Hendrickson, piano

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

As one of the most respected jazz pianists in Texas, PAUL ENGLISH has performed with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie, David Liebman, Kirk Whalum, Mark O'Connor, and Houston’s own beloved Arnett Cobb. From 1978-1985 his own groups were among the most popular headliners in Texas, playing jazz, fusion, and their own original music.

Since that time, he has devoted most of his time to study and development as a serious composer, most notably as a student of renowned composer Paul Cooper of the Shepherd School of Music. He has written music for radio, film, television, multimedia performances, small jazz groups and big bands, as well as electronic, chamber, and symphony orchestras.

While he remains active in jazz and popular music as a composer and performer, English’s serious compositional efforts focus primarily on mixed-genre music and the collaborative interaction of the various arts. His unique blend of symphonic instruments and computer-assisted synthesizers has become one of his trademarks as has his emphasis on real-time creative interaction among musicians and other performing artists.

Paul English is a native Texan and continues to live and work in Houston.

The music of ROBERT XAVIER RODRIGUEZ is widely performed and recorded in European and American musical centers, with over 600 professional orchestral and operatic performances in recent seasons. He has held composer-in-residence appointments with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, with whom he still serves as consultant to Music Director Eduardo Mata. He is also Professor of Music at the University of Texas at Dallas, President of the Texas Composers Forum, and a member of the opera and composer fellowship panels of the National Endowment for the Arts. Robert Rodriguez studied composition with Hunter Johnson, Halsey Stevens, Elliott Carter, Bruno Maderna, Jacob Druckman, and Nadia Boulanger. He first gained international recognition with the 1971 Prix de Composition Prince Pierre de Monaco. Other honors include the Prix Lili Boulanger and awards from ASCAP, the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations, and the Goddard Lieberson Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. His music is recorded on the Crystal, Orion, and Nonesuch labels and is published by E.C. Schirmer.
REGINALD R. RISÓN, Professor of Music at Paul Quinn College in Dallas, came to Texas in 1983 as Coordinator of Music at Bishop College. In 1986, the Dallas Symphony performed excerpts from his work, Freedom Suite. He has been a Trustee of Voices of Change (Southern Methodist University), the Founder and President of DACAPO-DALLAS, INC., and Regional Scholarship Director of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. (NANM). The Texas Composers Forum (Dallas branch) also presented his original songs in 1989.

Dr. Rison received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Brooklyn College (New York City), his Master of Science from the Manhattan School of Music, and his doctorate in education from Columbia University.

ELLSWORTH MILBURN is Professor of Music at the Shepherd School of Music where he teaches composition and theory. He received his musical education at U.C.L.A., Mills College, and the College-Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati. From 1963-1968, he was music director for The Committee, San Francisco’s improvisational theater company, and composed music for radio, television, and film. In 1970, he was appointed to the faculty of the College-Conservatory of Music (Cincinnati), where he established the Contemporary Music Ensemble and directed Music ’71-75, Cincinnati’s contemporary series. As a composer, he has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and commissions from a number of ensembles including the Concord String Quartet, the Montagnana Trio, the Philadelphia Composers Forum, the Houston Symphony, the Springfield (Missouri) Symphony, and the Concert Artists Guild.

The participants of the Festival of American Contemporary Music gratefully acknowledge Paul Cooper, Lynette S. Autrey Professor in Music and Composer-in-Residence at Rice University, for his contributions as coordinator of these events that have celebrated American Music Week at Rice University since 1986.

The Shepherd School of Music received the winning award from the National Federation of Music Clubs for the performance and promotion of American music during 1989-90 and 1990-91. Other winning institutions (privately-supported) who received an honorable mention include Carnegie Mellon University (1989-90) and the Eastman School of Music (1990-91).
Three Scenes from “Streetcar” . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Paul English

When Herschel Wilkenfeld contacted me about composing a new work for the cello, I immediately thought of writing a piece that would in some way relate to the theatre, since I knew that to be the other of his great loves.

I asked him to name, in his opinion, the most influential American playwright of the twentieth century. Without pause he answered, “Tennessee Williams.” I then asked him to name the one play which might best epitomize Williams as a writer, and after only a moment of thought he concluded, “Streetcar.” I thus set out to create a performance piece that would be born not only of dialog but also of the preconceived thoughts and feelings of any in the listening audience who might have read A Streetcar Named Desire or experienced the movie or witnessed a stage production somewhere.

I chose three scenes which I feel best convey the escalation of tensions between Blanche and Stanley. After all, Streetcar is really about this conflict of predator and prey. Blanche DuBois is a desperate woman whose last remaining hope is her sister, Stella, bride of the crude barbarian, Stanley Kowalski. Each of the three scenes is begun by dialog which gradually gives way to music. The scene is completed by each listener’s memory or imagination depending on his familiarity with the play. The music serves as a conduit for this transfer or as an abstract canvas for the creative listener.

William’s many references to the incessant “blue piano” or Negro bar-room jazz which can always be heard “just around the corner or a few doors down the street” and his colorful painting of street life in the New Orleans of the forties made the musical influences on my work inevitable and obvious. The cello may at first seem as incongruous in this setting as the delicate Miss DuBois, but by the end of Scene III it has become a voice as familiar as the blues trombonist down the street, and Blanche DuBois’s last hopes have been cruelly crushed in a brutal rape scene. The music itself, in the tradition of the blues, is in sharp contrast to the reality of such a violent scene.

Three Scenes from “Streetcar” was commissioned by Herschel Wilkenfeld and Johanna Hoffman and was first performed at the home of Ms. Hoffman on October 13, 1991.

Scene I (Act I Scene 1): Stanley Kowalski has just come home from a night of bowling to find that his wife’s sister, Blanche, has arrived for an unannounced visit.

Scene II (Act I Scene 2): Stanley has begun to suspect that Blanche has cheated Stella and him out of their share of the family inheritance. Sensing that a skirmish between Stanley and her is about to erupt, Blanche has sent Stella to the drugstore to get her a lemon coke.
Scene III (Act III Scene 4): Stanley has been out drinking, celebrating the imminent arrival of his first child. With Stella in the hospital, Blanche finds herself alone in the house with Stanley. In desperation she has concocted a story that an oil millionaire from Dallas has wired her an invitation to join him. Stanley senses that she is trapped and helpless.

Estampie . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Robert Xavier Rodriguez

Rodriguez’s orchestral ballet Estampie was commissioned and premiered by The Dallas Ballet. The present chamber version (for clarinet, cello, piano, and percussion) was written and premiered that same year at the American Dance Festival at Duke University.

The strong percussive element in the instrumentation of both versions is reinforced by the use of a Medieval estampie, which is quoted literally in most of the eight sections and developed throughout the work:

I. Estampitta Ghaetta The estampie is announced.

II. In The Reversible Rag the Medieval rhythm dissolves into a four-note bass figure which expands into a 12-note row, then shrinks back to the original four notes in mirror fashion. Over this accompaniment a lopsided atonal rag appears (in two halves, each half containing its own mirror image) slightly out of phase with the bass. The first movement is then repeated.

III. In the Intermezzo (Adagio), the estampie is embellished with lyrical interludes while the ragtime mirror bass (this time in the treble) remains serenely in the background.

IV. In the Scherzo (the heart of the ballet), the regular rhythm of the estampie is sharply juxtaposed with disjunct atonal writing. Ragtime rhythms (with irregular accents in a regular context) are employed as a bridge between the two styles. As all the forces interact, the estampie appears to be swallowed up as contemporary rhythms and sonorities prevail. The Medieval element continues, however, disguised by the use of such Ars Nova techniques as the layering of countermelodies (discant) and the repetition of rhythmic units that function independently of the original melody (isorhythm). A synthesis of styles is thus reached, after which the estampie reappears in its original form.

V. The Slow Sleazy Rag, with a pompously Wagnerian beginning and ending, is based on the arpeggiated accompaniment of the first Adagio (III). This movement is a companion piece to the

VI. Couple Action Rag in that the two are slow/fast versions of the same material, as in traditional pavane/gaillard pairings. Here the cabaret, rather than the court, is strongly suggested.
VII. *Rimbombo*, or resonance, is a vigorous toccata with an angular discant again disguising the *estampie*. When the movement reaches its peak, the Medieval tune quietly emerges.

VIII. The finale, *The Reversible Rag Reversed*, is a grand quodlibet in which *The Reversible Rag, The Couple Action Rag* and the *estampie* are played simultaneously.

A recent review from the Los Angeles Times described *Estampie* as “a delightful interplay of rollicking rhythms and dissonant fragmentation that drew upon a Medieval refrain, ragtime colorings and a chilly serial melancholy. Strains of Scott Joplin were filtered through the jazzy Berlin sleaze of Kurt Weill or the eccentric whimsy of Erik Satie to create a poetic drama that teetered over the brink into a frenzied jamboree.”

*Three Daily Songs* . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Reginald Risón

*Morning’s Revelation* describes a bird in flight on a cold snowy day, and its attempts to fly through the winter storm. It is overcome, falls, and dies. It is a lesson to man to heed impending dangers of life.

*Greet the Day* turns away from sadness and towards a more encouraging outlook on life. “Now God has given me your life, and I can bid the sorrow morn good-bye, and greet this day anew ... with you.”

*Night Comes* brings back the uncertainty of life as darkness and heaviness stands in the way of progress. But “memories of the day we lived for” give us each other’s adoration and strength to go on.

*Menil Antiphons* . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Ellsworth Milburn

*Menil Antiphons*, the first work commissioned by the Da Camera Society, was written to take advantage of the architectural properties of the Menil Collection. In the first two-thirds of the piece, the horns are separated from the core ensemble, creating the antiphonal affect suggested in the title. In addition, the Christmas antiphon, “Puer natus est”, is heard in the bells played by various members of the ensemble in the final section.

— The above notes by the respective composers.
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Texas Composers Forum’s Showcase Concert Series presents the music of Texas composers in professional performances throughout the state. TCF’s programs include concerts, educational forums, radio broadcasts, a nationally-distributed newsletter, and Performance Assistance Grants to other nonprofit organizations. TCF encourages commissioning of new works, performances by major symphony orchestras and smaller ensembles, collaborative projects, recording and broadcast opportunities, and appropriate compensation to composers working in all styles of music. TCF’s Dallas headquarters houses an active library of scores and tapes.

Texas Composers Forum
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