

ANTHONY GENGE

FIRST DUO CANON FOR THREE INTERMEZZO NIGHT RAIN
FOUR QUIET PRELUDES STRING QUARTET GREY AND WHITE



Performers:

Karin Aurell, flute

Mark Adam, marimba

Barbara Pritchard, piano

Richard Volet, alto flute

Bryan Townsend, guitar

Anthony Genge, piano(s)

Blue Engine String Quartet:

Jennifer Jones, violin

Anne Simons, violin

Margot Aldrich, viola

Hilary Brown, cello

Arraymusic Ensemble:

Robert W. Stevenson, clarinet

Michael White, trumpet

Richard Sacks, percussion

Blair Mackay, percussion

Stephen Clarke, piano

Rebecca van der Post, violin

Peter Pavlovsky, double bass

Henry Kucharzyk, conductor

Anthony Genge was born in Vancouver, Canada, in 1952. He worked as a performer of jazz and rhythm and blues for a number of years before studying composition formally.

Genge was a student of Morton Feldman between 1982 and 1985, completing a Ph.D. in composition at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He also studied composition with Bruce Mather at McGill University and Martin Bartlett and Rudolf Komorous at the University of Victoria. In 1979, he studied with the Japanese composer Jo Kondo in Tokyo. During this time he also visited several Pacific-Rim countries, studying their traditional music. By the 1990s, the style and influences in his music had become increasingly diverse, and since that time his music has been characterized by its distinctive harmonic language, elegant orchestration and postmodern mix of musical elements.

Genge's solo, chamber, and orchestral music, the first of which dates from the mid-1970s, has been performed and commissioned by leading soloists and ensembles throughout Canada, the United States, Europe and Japan, and his music has also been used for dance and film.

Currently, he divides his time between Antigonish, Nova Scotia on the East Coast of Canada, where he is Professor of Music at St. Francis Xavier University, and Victoria, B.C., on the Canadian West Coast. In addition to his work as a composer, Genge continues to perform and record as a jazz pianist.



This recording presents a selection of compositions written between the late 1970s through 2003, which are representative of some of the compositional interests that I was exploring during this period. These recordings also present performances of these works which are definitive in regard to both style and tempo.

First Duo (1992)

First Duo is scored for flute and marimba. In two of my other works, *New Hockets* (1986) (for flute and piano), and *New Hockets II* (1992) (for clarinet, marimba, and piano), I had explored the ancient musical technique of hocket; the dividing of a single melodic line into two or more separate lines. While the *New Hockets* pieces referred directly to medieval musical material and practices, *First Duo* and its companion piece, *Second Duo* (1993) (for clarinet and piano), take a more lighthearted and contemporary approach to this idea. At the time of the composition of *First Duo*, I also remember wanting to try to write music that was both fast and very rhythmic, but not in the repetitive sense of much 'minimalist' music. It seemed to me that, at the time, this was a somewhat rare quality in contemporary music. While writing this

work, I also remember hearing this music as either the soundtrack for a hyperkinetic cartoon, or as some kind of strange, angular, Latin dance music! In *First Duo*, the two instruments explore various permutations of the musical material, in a texture of asymmetrical, dance-like rhythms. This kind of 'continuous variations', which, in a way, looks at the same material from many different directions, is a common feature of many of my pieces since the early 1980s. In *First Duo*, sections of the piece with this kind of texture contrast with other short sections, where the instruments are fused together in rhythmic unison, highlighting the similarities in the sound of the two instruments. Although very brief, *First Duo* presents certain challenges for the performers, such as rhythmic precision and feel, and a great accuracy in ensemble performance.

Canon for Three (1996)

Canon for Three is a work for three pianos. It can also be performed in a version for piano and two vibraphones. Starting in the early 1990s, I wrote several pieces which employ contrapuntal techniques such as canons and mirror structures (or musical palindromes). Although such techniques are normally associated with melodic material, in these pieces I applied them instead to the kind of music I was writing at the time, music that was generally harmonic, or vertical in its conception (e.g., *Four Quiet Preludes*). Starting with the piece *House of Mirrors* (1993) for two pianos (written in the form of a mirror canon), I wrote several more pieces based on this idea. Of these, *Canon for Three* comes closest to using the approach of a traditional musical canon — two or more voices imitating each other intervallically, at different time gaps. In *Canon for Three*, the three

performers play exactly the same pitch material, mostly chords or single notes. However, here, the three voices of the canon follow each other in a more fluid and flexible way than in a traditional canon, causing the musical material to overlap and form pointillistic clusters of sound. As in a traditional canon, the music for the individual players is strictly notated. However, it differs from a traditional canon in that the metrical organization of the pitch material varies in each part, and the performers are instructed to play independently throughout the piece. Occasionally, places are indicated where the performers can align with each other (if they desire). This independence results in a flexible vertical alignment of the three parts, and (assuming all of the players have a good sense of time) each performance is similar, but never exactly the same.

Intermezzo (1997)

Intermezzo was written at the request of Michael J. Baker, then music director of the Toronto-based contemporary music ensemble Arraymusic, for a concert featuring a number of 'miniatures' — short pieces by mainly Canadian composers. The work is scored for the unusual instrumentation of the Arraymusic ensemble: clarinet, trumpet, violin, bass, piano and two percussionists (playing vibraphone, glockenspiel, tubular bells, tam tam, and bass drum). *Intermezzo* is in three sections — fast and agitated at the start and gradually changing, through a middle, ostinato section on a single chord, to a relaxed, quietly floating texture in the final part of the piece. At the very end, strains of the material from the opening of the piece are fleetingly heard once more, interrupted by quiet rolls on the bass drum.

Intermezzo can also be heard on the soundtrack for the National Film Board of Canada film, *The Man Who Studies Murder* (2004).

Night Rain (1978)

The oldest composition on this CD, *Night Rain* for alto flute and guitar, reflects some of my musical concerns in the late 1970s. The score for this work is in a 'mobile' form, and, as such, the material for each of the instruments is arranged so that it can be performed in any order chosen by the performers. The work is written in three 'movements', and all of the material for each movement — between 8-10 short musical fragments for each performer — must be performed only once, without repeats, before both performers can proceed to the next movement. The work calls for an active interplay between the two performers, and each performance will be similar in many respects, but always differing in its details. The title for the work comes from an 18th century Japanese *Ukiyo-e* woodblock print, *Night Rain in the Yoshiwara*, by Ippitsusai Buncho.

Four Quiet Preludes (1995)

Four Quiet Preludes, for solo piano, is perhaps the most extreme or minimal of all my compositions, in regard to both the musical material and to the very slow, meditative unfolding of this material. These four pieces (played without a pause) were, for me, a kind of personal meditation on certain harmonic structures that I have explored in nearly all of my work, from the early 1980s until today. I tried to find a system in which I could incorporate both tonal and atonal harmonic material simultaneously. I wanted to create a flexible musical language that could embrace both of these facets of music at the same time, without having to give up one for the other. As such, *Four Quiet Preludes* became a kind of personal *Harmonielehre*,

for a harmonic soundworld that can be heard, with the exception of *Night Rain* and *Grey and White*, in all of the other works on this recording. The compositional idea for *Four Quiet Preludes* also evolved from an interest in exploring the way a single musical idea could suggest a larger idea or form, similar to the manner in which a *Haiku*, for example, can express a much larger idea with a few carefully chosen words. Each of the four pieces quietly explores the essence of only one or two melodic or harmonic ideas. Another important element of the work is the resonance of the piano itself. The piano's sustain pedal is held down throughout, creating a kind of continuous 'harmonic shadow,' and the resonance of the various harmonies can be heard long after they are played, interacting with new material.

String Quartet (2002-03)

Since the 1990s, beginning with pieces such as *Three Short Pieces* (1994) (for alto flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion), my music began to embrace a much wider range of musical content, and rely less on a single idea or 'monolithic' form. In these pieces, including the *String Quartet*, many short, sometimes rapidly contrasting sections of music are used, often heard only fleetingly, a kind of musical tapestry. However, these sections are related in some way — harmonically and/or melodically. Although this approach may be seen as being in some way 'postmodern', or even as a type of 'cinematic' technique, it can perhaps best be described as a set of 'continuous variations.' The brevity of many of these sections of music also reflects a debt to the early, miniature works of the Austrian composer Anton Webern.

The *String Quartet* is in four movements, which are played without a pause. They all share a four-note musical figure (i.e., D, Eb, F, G), informed in part by the violin writing at the opening of Corelli's *Trio Sonata, Op. 3, No. 2*. This figure is used throughout the work, in a wide variety of musical settings, and subjected to many transformations. At the beginning of the first movement, it is heard as it slowly unfolds, both melodically and harmonically. It is heard again in the fast, somewhat agitated second movement, as a canon between the two violins. In the third movement, it is presented in a variety of lyrical ways. The final movement starts in the manner of the second, fast movement, but gradually transforms into a tranquil and floating texture, and the original material is heard in its simplest ascending melodic form, played in the upper register by the first violin and cello. The *String Quartet* was premiered by the Blue Engine String Quartet in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 2003.

Grey and White (1981)

Like *Night Rain*, *Grey and White* for solo flute, reflects some of my musical influences and preoccupations of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1979, having been interested for some time in both the contemporary music of Japanese composers and the traditional music of Japan, I visited Japan to hear this music in person. Like many Western (and contemporary Japanese) composers, I found myself particularly entranced by the music that accompanied the traditional Japanese *Noh* drama. In particular, the unique, flexible, floating feeling of time found in this music was unlike anything I had heard in any other music. *Grey and White* blends techniques and stylistic elements of contemporary flute music with the influence of the flute music heard in the *Noh* drama. The flautist

is often asked to use alternate fingerings throughout the work, in order to produce alternate tunings: quarter-tones and various micro-tones. Although micro-tones are sometimes found in contemporary music for the flute as a colouristic effect, in *Grey and White*, influenced by the music of the *Noh* flute, they are extensively used as an expressive device. The performer is also often asked to use various 'extended techniques': 'keyed' vibrato, glissandi, and a wide variety of articulations. *Grey and White* contrasts passages of long, sustained notes and periods of silence with occasional passages of rapid activity, which I hoped would reflect the kind of abstraction, understatement and refinement heard in the *Noh* music.

Anthony Genge
Victoria, 2008

First Duo, Grey and White

Recording Engineer: Rod Sneddon
Recorded at Immaculata Hall,
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, 2003

String Quartet

Recording Engineer: Rod Sneddon
Recorded at St. Anselm's Church,
West Chezzetcook, Nova Scotia, 2005

Four Quiet Preludes

Recording Engineer: Rod Sneddon
Recorded at St. David's Church,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2006

Intermezzo

Recording Engineer: Clive Allen
Recorded at Glenn Gould Studio,
Toronto, Ontario, 2001

Canon for Three

Recording Engineer: Christopher Butterfield;
special thanks to Kirk McNally
Recorded at Phillip T. Young Recital Hall,
University of Victoria,
Victoria, British Columbia, 2007

Night Rain

Analog recording: Downtown Sound Studio,
Victoria, British Columbia, ca. 1986

Cover Art: Masaco Kondo

Design: Clint Hutzulak, Mutasis.com

Photo: Bernice MacDonald

Producer: Anthony Genge

Contact: tgenge@stfx.ca
www.stfx.ca/people/tgenge/

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ANTHONY GENGE

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| 1 | First Duo , for flute and marimba (1992) | [3:15] |
| | Karin Aurell, flute, Mark Adam, marimba | |
| 2 | Canon for Three , for 3 pianos (1996) | [9:23] |
| | Anthony Genge, piano(s) | |
| 3 | Intermezzo , for 7 players (1997) | [4:33] |
| | Arraymusic Ensemble | |
| 4 | Night Rain , for alto flute and guitar (1978) | [7:09] |
| | Richard Volet, alto flute, Bryan Townsend, guitar | |
| 5 | Four Quiet Preludes , for solo piano (1995) | [7:40] |
| | Barbara Pritchard, piano | |
| 6 | String Quartet (2003) | [18:37] |
| | Blue Engine String Quartet | |
| 7 | Grey and White , for solo flute (1981) | [9:38] |
| | Karin Aurell, flute | |

Total Playing Time: 60:32