

Incredible Decades (2019) Disc 7.

1–3 Road Movies for Violin and Piano (1995)

JOHN ADAMS (Born 1947)

Relaxed groove

Meditative

40% swing

CHAD HOOPES, *violin*; GLORIA CHIEN, *piano*

4–6 Concertino for Clarinet and String Quartet (1994)

BRIGHT SHENG (Born 1955)

Andante

Prestissimo

Largo

ROMIE DE GUISE-LANGLOIS, *clarinet*; SOOVIN KIM,

CHAD HOOPES, *violins*;

RICHARD O'NEILL, *viola*; KEITH ROBINSON, *cello*

7 F. C.'s Jig for Violin and Viola (1991)

MARK O'CONNOR (Born 1961)

ARNAUD SUSSMANN, *violin*; PAUL NEUBAUER, *viola*

8–12 Micro-Concerto (1999)

STEVEN MACKEY (Born 1956)

Chords and Fangled Drumset

Interlude No. 1 Vibes Solo

Click, Clak, Clank

Interlude No. 2 Marimba and Cello –

Tune in Seven

AYANO KATAOKA, *percussion*; TARA HELEN O'CONNOR,

flute; ROMIE DE GUISE-LANGLOIS, *clarinet*; KRISTIN LEE,

violin; DAVID REQUIRO, *cello*; HYEYEON PARK, *piano*

In 1921, Russian influence expanded in the east, the Miss America pageant was born, and, for the first time, baseball was heard on the radio. *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's immortal documentation of the hedonistic Jazz Age, was published in 1925. Four years later, Wall Street crashed, bringing a decade of prosperity to an end. These years likewise saw Romanticism's cinematic legacy come to life in the music of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, while nationalist fervor found voice in Ravel's Basque rhythms and Prokofiev's lyric melodies. The sixth volume of Music@Menlo *LIVE* 2019 joyfully celebrates the dynamism, grandeur, and exuberance of the Roaring Twenties.

Liner notes by Patrick Castillo © 2019

The final volume of the 2019 edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE* showcases a brilliant mosaic of musical voices that illuminated the twentieth century's final decade.

Composers had a myriad of influences in their ears, from the world's folk traditions to rock and roll. While such luminaries as John Adams helped us process the traumas of the past, a new generation looked anxiously and eagerly to a dawning horizon. This final disc presents the uncompromising modernism, yesteryear Romanticism, and forward-looking audacity of music at the millennium.

JOHN ADAMS (Born 1947)

Road Movies for Violin and Piano (1995)

Composer's Note

After years of studiously avoiding the chamber music format, I have suddenly begun to compose for the medium in real earnest. The 1992 Chamber Symphony was followed by the string quartet *John's Book of Alleged Dances*, written for Kronos in 1994, and now comes *Road Movies*. For years the chamber music scenario remained a not particularly fertile bed in which to grow my musical ideas. My music of the '70s and '80s was principally about massed sonorities and the physical and emotional potency of big walls of triadic harmony.

These musical gestures were not really germane to chamber music with its democratic parceling of roles, its transparency and timbral delicacy. Moreover, the challenge of writing melodically, something that chamber music demands above and beyond all else, was yet to be solved.

Fortunately, a breakthrough in melodic writing came about during the writing of *The Death of Klinghoffer*, an opera whose subject and mood required a whole new appraisal of my musical language.

The title *Road Movies* is total whimsy, probably suggested by the "groove" in the piano part, all of which is required to be played in a "swing" mode (second and fourth of every group of four notes are played slightly late).

Movement I is a relaxed drive down a not unfamiliar road. Material is recirculated in a sequence of recalls that suggest a rondo form.

Movement II is a simple meditation of several small motives. A solitary figure in an empty desert landscape.

Movement III is for four-wheel drives only, a big perpetual motion machine called *40% swing*. On modern MIDI sequencers, the desired amount of swing can be adjusted with almost ridiculous accuracy. *40%* provides a giddy, bouncy ride, somewhere between an Ives ragtime and a long ride out by the Goodman Orchestra,

circa 1939. It is very difficult for violin and piano to maintain over the seven-minute stretch, especially in the tricky cross-hand style of the piano part. Relax, and leave the driving to us.

—John Adams

BRIGHT SHENG (Born 1955)

Concertino for Clarinet and String Quartet (1994)

Composer's Note

Many Central European composers such as Bartók and Janáček have believed that the fundamental elements for their music come from the native folk music and prosody of their native languages. And therefore when one understands the folk music and languages from these regions, one can truly understand and appreciate their works. Although this may be true, the music of these composers is nonetheless widely liked and admired by millions who do not know their languages. In that respect, this is the very goal I wish to achieve in my writing, which stems from Asian culture.

The materials of this work are drawn from fragments of folk tunes I heard over twenty years ago when I was living in the northwest part of China. What struck me then was that, unlike most Chinese folk music, the folk music from that region is not based on a pentatonic scale. Rather, it has a seven-note scale similar to the Mixolydian church mode. I wondered what it would be like if one were to use this melodic pattern in work for Western instruments and whether it would lose its Asian quality.

As with many of my other compositions, this work was inspired by the characteristics of the instruments and the virtuosity of the musicians who gave the premiere of the work.

Concertino for Clarinet and String Quartet was commissioned by and written for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and its Artistic Director David Shifrin.

—Bright Sheng

MARK O'CONNOR (Born 1961)

F. C.'s Jig for Violin and Viola (1991)

Composer's Note

F. C.'s Jig adapted for violin and viola is from the album *Appalachia Waltz* featuring Yo-Yo Ma (1996). I utilized the third movement of my *Fiddle Concerto* and arranged from it a violin and cello duet. Here, I have adapted the instrumentation to violin and viola. The result is a virtuoso duet full of melody, interplay, and energy, pushing both instruments all the way to its conclusion.

F. C.'s Jig is a spirited, well-known derivation of *The Fiddle Concerto's* jig.

—Mark O'Connor

STEVEN MACKKEY (Born 1956)

Micro-Concerto (1999)

Composer's Note

Several years ago I attended the Percussive Arts Society National Convention. There I witnessed a ninety-minute clinic on state-of-the-art techniques for playing crash cymbals. I confess that there was something humorously esoteric about the event, but I left inspired to imagine particular ways to coax sound out of pieces of wood, metal, and skin instead of simply hitting things. It also woke me to the fact that the first step in writing for percussion is to invent the instrument and a playing technique. Percussionists tend to have an adventurous attitude about this: if they can reach it with an arm or leg or hold it in the mouth, it is fair game. I'm fascinated by the one-man-band mentality of juggling contrasting timbres produced by a gamut ranging from finely crafted instruments to kitchen utensils and hobby shop paraphernalia.

In addition to providing a virtuoso "vehicle" for the percussionist, *Micro-Concerto* explores a variety of more complex roles that the individual can play in relation to the ensemble. In Movement I: *Chords and Fangled Drum Set*, the rhythm is front and center. I imagine that the piano chords harmonize the rhythm instead of the rhythm measuring the harmonies.

Movement II: *Interlude No. 1 Vibes Solo* is a short, lyrical ballad.

In Movement III: *Click, Clak, Clank*, the percussionist is neither an accompanying rhythm section nor leading melody. I think of it as a contextualizing and interpreting narration spoken in some imaginary tongue-clicking language.

In Movement IV: *Interlude No. 2 Marimba and Cello*, the two instruments are completely codependent; the story is told only by their interplay. In some sense they are a single instrument with timbres no more disparate than the clickers and samba whistle that are part of the percussionist's instrument in Movement III. This movement flows without pause into Movement V: *Tune in Seven*. In the first half of the movement, the percussionist is one of six players tossing around a set of variations on the *Tune*. Toward the end the percussionist returns to the "fangled drum set" and shifts the focus back to what must be (along with singing) the most fundamental form of musical expression—hitting things in time.

The two interludes are played on big, standard pieces of percussion “furniture,” but the main movements focus on small moves and subtle distinctions. They are full of fussy descriptions of how to play some handheld “toy” just so. This micromanagement of small muscle groups, and the fact that the concerto soloist is accompanied by the smallest orchestra imaginable, suggested the title.

Micro-Concerto was commissioned by a Meet the Composer grant for the New York New Music Ensemble, the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and the California EAR Unit.

—Steven Mackey

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