



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

January 2006

STEPHEN PRESTON AND AMARA GUITRY ON ECOSONICS

*Uniting the old, the new, science, nature,
expression and intangibility*

Interview by Jane Rigler



Ecosonics, the baroque flute duo of Stephen Preston and Amara Guity, is truly unique. This interview, held entirely through email, is an introduction to their new world of unclassifiable music. Before we get to the questions, however, you first need to know more about “Ecosonics” (the genre). An overview (in the duo’s own words) is in the sidebar on page five.

In Concert

ECOSONICS

Stephen Preston and Amara Guity

*There and Back Again with the Baroque Flute:
A Journey from the 18th to the 21st Century*

Sunday, **January 22, 2006**, 5:30 pm
Yamaha Piano Salon, 689 Fifth Avenue
(entrance between Fifth and Madison on 54th Street)

- Sonata No. 3, Op. 47 Joseph Bodin de Boismortier
(c. 1691–1755)
- Two French baroque bird pieces
 - Le Rossignol en Amour* François Couperin
(c.1722) arr. Guity/Preston (c. 1631–c. 1710)
 - Le CouCou* Louis-Claude Daquin
(1735) arr. Spell/Guity (1694–1772)
- Two arias from *The Magic Flute* W.A. Mozart
(1792) arr. for two flutes (1756–1791)
- Duo No. 3 in A Minor François Devienne
(published c. 1816) (1759–1803)
- La Preciosa C.M. von Weber
arr. Franz Doppler (1786–1826)
- After Hokusai, Op. 89 Carey Blyton
(1983) (1932–2002)
- songbirdsongs, Book I John Luther Adams
(1974–80) arr. Preston/Guity (b. 1953)
- Faces for two baroque flutes Sergio Roberto de Oliveira
(2001) (b. 1970)
- Ecosonic Improvisations Stephen Preston and Amara Guity

Program subject to change.

JR: How did you come up with the idea to create this kind of music? Have any particular composers inspired you?

STEPHEN PRESTON: The route that led to ecosonics began with my doctoral research. Originally I was going to do a doctorate developing a new form of all-dancing, all-singing, all-acting entertainment based on the old English Court Masque, but unfortunately, after a very hard year, the funding for that research fell through. So rather than throw in the towel, I decided I’d fall back on the resource over which I had most control and didn’t require funding—which was the flute—although at the time I had no idea what I was going to do.

But I live in the country, surrounded by the sounds of nature. It was when I

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2005–2006

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Newsletter

Katherine Saenger, *Editor*
 115 Underhill Road
 Ossining, NY 10562
 (914) 762-8582
 ksaenger@yahoo.com

Alice Barmore, *Layout/Production*
 125 Christopher St., #4H
 New York, NY 10014
 (212) 675-9706 (phone and fax)
 abarmore@earthlink.net

www.nyfluteclub.org

Going Electric *by David Wechsler*



From the President

Those of you attending the November concert by Camilla Hoitenga were treated to a compelling performance of music for flute and electronic sounds. Many audience members had questions about how the sounds were created and how the concert was put together. Since we are having Rhonda Larson as our guest artist for this year's flute fair, and she performs in a similar genre, I thought I would talk about electronics and its niche in today's contemporary music performances.

Electronic music existed prior to the 20th century*, but did not attract much interest until the early 20th century, when many new electronic instruments appeared. One of the

better-known ones was the theremin, invented by the Russian Leon Theremin [aka Lev Termen] and introduced c. 1920. Many of us have heard the theremin in motion pictures. It was a staple of many science fiction movies in the 1950s (*The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Thing*, to name just two), and of course it is the soprano-like counter melody in the chorus of the Beach Boys' song "Good Vibrations."

Post-World War II saw the growth of electronic music studios in radio stations in Europe and universities in the USA. Most college electronic music studios were patterned after the Columbia/Princeton Electronic Music Center. Creating pieces in those early days was extremely labor-intensive. Each sound was created individually with the use of oscillators and filters, then recorded on tape, spliced together, and then, a few years later, put on multitrack tape recorders. Tape loops for repeated material were created that ran around the studio room, with little assist rollers fastened to microphone stands every few feet! Different rhythms came from the length of the tape and leader tape in between. Even the angle of a tape cut affected the articulation of a sound. In 1963, Mario Davidovsky wrote *Synchronism No. 1* for flute and tape, the first of a set of pieces for live performers of traditional instruments and electronic sound. These have become classics in the electronic literature. In 1964, Wendy Carlos composed a set of variations for flute and electronic sounds that was released on a Turnabout LP. In 1988, I did the tape realization of a piece called *Specchi*, by Franco Dominutti, which called for four tracks of prerecorded flute music, played at different tape speeds and entering at different times. The flutist then plays a solo part along with this tape.

These days most electronic composers write and realize their work on computers. Powerful software for sound creation, recording, editing, and notation is widely available. Camilla Hoitenga performed a combination of *Synchronism*-style pieces with a fixed electronic accompaniment and some electronically interactive pieces. On these she played the flute, and a microphone fed her sound into a laptop computer, where it was altered in some fashion, and then sent back out to the speakers. The idea of altering a flute sound electronically in real time is not new. I used to play electric flute with a rig of guitar effects boxes that included a phase shifter, fuzz box, digital delay, and, my personal favorite, the Electro-Harmonix Micro Synth! What's new is the ease and sophistication with which sounds can be created and manipulated. It is much easier to compose a piece or prepare a performance using an interactive setup on a laptop than cutting tape or performing with a floor full of wires and guitar boxes. At Camilla's concert, Bryan Wolf assisted her at the computer and composed some of the music. It is not entirely necessary to have an assistant or sound man, however. It is possible to have foot switches or microswitches attached to your flute and then to trigger effects at appropriate moments in the music yourself.

The music for most live electronic pieces generally resembles conventional musical notation—a staff with a solo part coupled with either conventional notation of the electronic sounds, or some graphic representation of what the sound will do throughout the course of the piece. This seems to have evolved as the best way for following an electronic score and keeping your place as the sounds go by. These days there are any number of ways to create and perform electronic music according to your own personal taste and preference. □

* Interested readers are referred to www.obsolete.com/120_years/ for some examples—Ed.

Member Profile

Michael A. Laderman

NYFC member on and off since 1979



Employment: Adjunct assistant professor of music at Polytechnic University (downtown Brooklyn) and the Preparatory Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College.

A recent recital/performance: On December 6, 2005, a 92nd Street Y concert of French music by Roussel, Leroux, Debussy, and Casadesus with pianist Arielle Levioff at the Makor Café in the Steinhardt Building on West 67th Street, NYC.

Career highlight(s): A Weill recital as a winner of Artists International (1996); performing Matthew H. Fields' *Rooster's Court Ball* at the 2002 NFA convention in Washington, DC, and recording it on *Kabala*, a CD of the composer's music (MMC Records, 1998); performing "Michael's Piece" (written for him by his uncle Ezra Laderman) at the 1996 NFA convention in NYC; recitals with the wonderful-to-work-with pianist Arielle Levioff. Most interesting: playing with the Encompass New Opera Theatre in premiere performances of *Venus in Africa* by George Antheil (NY premiere in 1999) and *Un Racconto Fiorentino* by Louis Gioia (world premiere at Alice Tully Hall in 2000). Most enjoyable: playing with the contemporary jazz band, ZSound Collect, in an outdoor festival near the ferry landing in Staten Island (July 13, 2002).

Current flute(s): A c.1966 A=440 open-hole silver Haynes with a B foot, originally owned by Harold Bennett and purchased from Trudy Kane along with a newer Haynes headjoint (silver with 24k gold embouchure). A wood Haynes piccolo and a Miyazawa alto flute, both purchased new.

Influential flute teachers: Samuel Baron, Keith Underwood, Thomas Nyfenger, Sandra Miller, Alain Marion.

High school: The High School of Performing Arts in NYC.

Degrees: BFA in music [SUNY Purchase, 1983]; MM and DMA in flute performance [SUNY Stony Brook, 1991 and 1994].

Most notable and/or personally satisfying accomplishment(s): Most fundamental, in his own words: "...that I keep on playing and keep on improving. You don't stop learning after you leave school." Most exotic: returning to the east coast of Malaysia in 2003 as an honored guest of the school district in which he had attended public school as a 5th and 6th grader to give a speech (in local-accented Malay) and a concert (of American music and Malay children's songs with jazz improvisation).

Favorite practice routines: Improvisatory warm-ups followed by work on tone, articulation, rhythm, intervals, and breath control. He integrates his work on pieces with his work on technique, and vice versa.

Other interests: Photography (taking and viewing); history and anthropology; discoveries in astronomy, biology, etc.; news, travel, and good food; painting and sculpture (viewing only!).

Advice for NYFC members: Michael says, "Be versatile. With today's economic insecurity and rapidly changing technology, any knowledge you have in any subject may come in handy. So if you're offered a chance to teach World Music and you don't know much about Nigerian drumming, read up and teach the course. And if someone asks you whether you play Persian music, say 'Sure I do. Just give me some music to look at.' And never lose your enjoyment of playing. If you do, it's time to put the instrument away for a while." □

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

FREE to current NYFC members, this section lists upcoming performances by members; flute-related contests, auditions, and masterclasses organized/sponsored by members; and brief descriptions of members' new recordings, sheet music, and books. Send submissions to the Newsletter Editor.

JANUARY '06

JAN
21

Saturday 7:30 pm

Musical Chairs Chamber Ensemble presents composer-in-residence

ANDREW STERMAN in a concert of his own music and works of Mick Rossi, Peter Flint, Heitor Villa-Lobos and Philip Glass.

- Julia Music Performing Arts School, 864 Post Avenue, Staten Island, NY • Admission: \$10 in advance, \$12 at door; discounts for Staten Island Museum members • Info, call 718-907-3488 or visit www.mcensemble.org.

JAN
21

Saturday 8:00 pm

CAROL WINCENC, flute, performing the Mozart Quartet in C Major with the Guarneri Quartet.

- Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, NYC • Info, 212-535-7710.

JAN
24

Tuesday 7:30 pm

Da Capo on Shuffle, a hectic-eclectic mix of pop, jazz, techno, minimalism, microtonality, and sonic sketch comedy, by the Da Capo Chamber Players with **PATRICIA SPENCER**, flute. Works by Eric Moe, Derek Bermel, Michael Gordon, Gene Pritsker, Philippe Hurel, Martin Bresnick, and Kyle Gann.

- Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard Street, NYC • Admission: \$20 general; \$10 students/seniors • Info, visit www.dacapochamberplayers.org.

JAN
26

Thursday 8:00 pm

JAYN ROSENFELD, flute, and special guests, including Andrew Bolotowsky, flute, will play a program of chamber music by Frank Wigglesworth and some of his contemporaries from the 1930s.

- Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow Street, NYC • Admission: \$15 general; \$10 students/seniors • Info, call 212-242-4770 or email garts@greenwichhouse.org.

FEBRUARY '06

FEB
15

Wednesday 7:00–9:00 pm

The Paula Robison Master Class Series presents "The French School: the Flutist in Paris."

- Diller-Quaile School of Music, 24 East 95th Street, NYC • Admission (auditors): \$30 general, \$15 students • Info (or to apply as a participant) call 212-369-1484 x26 or visit www.diller-quaile.org.

FLUTE HAPPENINGS

FEBRUARY '06

**FEB
19**

Sunday 3:00 pm

BART FELLER, flute, performing the Griffes *Poem* and Kent

 Kennan's *Night Soliloquy* with the Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra under the direction of guest conductor David Hattner. Also on the program: music by Hansen (*Elegy*), Barber (*Essay #1*), and Copland (*Billy the Kid*).

- St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague Street (at Clinton Street), Brooklyn Heights, Brooklyn
- Admission is free • Info, visit www.brooklynphilharmonicsymphonyorchestra.org.

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Musical Chairs Chamber Ensemble, **TAMARA KESHECKI**, artistic director and founder, will be presenting a masterclass for young adults taught by composer and woodwind specialist **ANDREW STERMAN** on Saturday, January 21, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the Julia Music Performing Arts School, 864 Post Avenue, Staten Island, NY. Performers will receive a public lesson on breathing, tone, technique, relaxation, phrasing, and practice methods. Instrumentalists, singers, music enthusiasts, and music teachers are encouraged to attend. Admission: \$5 general, free to high school and college students. Info, call 718-907-3488 or visit www.mcensemble.org.

Flute Happenings Deadlines

Issue	Deadline	Mail date*
February 2006	01/12/06	02/02/06
March 2006	02/09/06	03/03/06
April 2006	03/16/06	04/06/06
May 2006	04/13/06	05/04/06

*Projected


ECOSONICS (cont'd from page 1)

was taking an autumnal walk trying to get over my despondency and get on with developing a new idea listening to the sounds around me—the wind in the trees, a stream babbling along beside me, and a robin (an English robin that is) in full autumn song—that I knew I wanted to investigate birdsong as a source of improvisation. At the time I had no idea or intention of creating a completely new music but rather of finding out new ways of using the musical vocabularies and systems that already existed.

Inevitably I found Messiaen inspiring; he had such a clear vision of what he was pursuing and he created some extraordinary music. Other sources I used were

EXPANDING HORIZONS NEW YORK FLUTE FAIR 2006

SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2006

 LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts
 100 Amsterdam Avenue (@ 65th Street)

Join the New York Flute Club and world-renowned soloist **Rhonda Larson** for a day of masterclasses, workshops, concerts, flute exhibits and marketplace. Please check www.nyfluteclub.org for detailed information and updates.

Masterclass With Rhonda Larson

Those interested in participating in the masterclass should send a one-page resume and good quality recording (tape or CD) with two contrasting movements or works which you intend to perform at the class (standard flute or piccolo repertoire, no avant-garde). Advanced high school level and beyond are preferred. Please send materials by **FEBRUARY 7** to: Jeanne Wilson, 2600 Netherland Avenue, Apt. 425, Riverdale, NY 10463; JAWflute@aol.com.

Attention All Ensemble Teachers!

Please contact Stefani Starin at Starin@newband.org by **FEBRUARY 7** if you are interested in having your student ensemble perform at NY Flute Fair 2006 on Sunday March 19 at 2:00 pm. Any ensemble of three or more students (ages up to 18) is eligible. Maximum 10 minutes for each group.

New York Flute Club Annual Competition

The preliminary and final auditions will be held at the Flute Fair on March 19, 2006. Winners will perform at the Yamaha Piano Salon on April 23, 2006. Eligible age is 18-27, applications must be postmarked by February 10, 2006. See www.nyfluteclub.org for details and application.

Katherine Fink, Flute Fair Chair

inspirational from the point of view of exploring the flute: Robert Dick's *The Other Flute* and *Tone Development through Extended Techniques*, as well as a collection of transcriptions for Boehm flute of traditional Chinese flute melodies, since traditional Chinese culture has a great affinity with the natural world, and birdsong figured in several of these melodies. My greatest inspiration came from my friend and PhD supervisor, Edward Cowie, who is not only a wonderful composer and painter, but unites his gifts as an artist with great knowledge of birds. But ultimately, as Messiaen said, it is the birds who are the greatest musicians, it was they that first inspired me and continue to do so.

JR: Have you performed any of Messiaen's works?

SP: I used to play *Le Merle Noir*, but long before I began my work on birdsong. Naturally, when I started my research I listened to a lot of Messiaen's wonderful bird-inspired music and read about his work. In the end, however, there were

fundamental points of divergence. First of all, the baroque flute doesn't begin to match the resources of even Messiaen's smallest scale birdsong compositions. Apart from characteristic rhythmic configurations, Messiaen used chordal textures to convey the timbre of song. He invented chords to reflect the color of song. Secondly, the philosophy behind Messiaen's work was very different from mine. Thirdly, Messiaen translated the microtones of birdsong into semitones, but one of the fundamental reasons for the development of ecosonics was the necessity for going beyond fixed intervals of semitones and the compound intervals arising from them. I found semitone-based systems both too wide and too fixed for my purposes. And, most importantly, I was trying to create a language of improvisation, not composition.

JR: What are you trying to convey with this music? Emotions, language...

SP: Emotions, yes; language, yes. Amara has described our music as immediate,

visceral and intangible. It is intangible because words have nothing to do with it. There are not the intellectual processes of finding and constructing meanings such as one does with note relationships in music and word relationships in speech. I am trying to find the sounds of our inner movement, which is what I hear and feel when I listen to birdsong. By inner movement, I don't mean something mystical or new age, but something that can't be verbalized.

AMARA GUITRY: This kind of improvisation is something like having a conversation in your native language, maybe something even beyond that. The process that takes place when one is making music with traditional fingerings (which can become very difficult and complex) can sometimes get in the way of musical and emotional expression. Technical concerns are virtually nonexistent in ecosonic improvisation, and therefore the music-making is much more like speaking, or communicating with someone you know so well that words are sometimes superfluous. Most of us are able to speak fluently in our own language, and are not in fact thinking of how to pronounce or fit words together, but rather, what we are attempting to express. And, at our best, we are making expression in an even more direct way than with language, communicating in a way that surpasses words.

JR: Why do you play together?

SP: For me the answer is very simple. Originally we started playing together because Amara learned the basic ecosonic system to assist me in my research. She did that brilliantly, making it possible to develop ecosonics as music. Having two same-voiced instruments was perfect for extending the model of duetting birds to duetting musicians. However, there is more to it than that: Amara is wonderfully talented, she has the perfect attitude to the flute as a means for making music, rather than as an end in itself. And we have fun playing together. But ultimately there is something else which can't be quantified—it just works so well.

AG: One could not ask for a more unique and rewarding partnership. Playing with Stephen is an unparalleled experience. Our ability to communicate allows us to make music unlike any other I have ever

experienced. Stephen's ideas are extraordinary, and it is more than a privilege to collaborate with him. He has a great deal of courage in music, he is always experimenting and willing to go to new places, and it is wonderful to have someone to share ideas and go to new musical places with. Ecosonic

A Bird's-Eye View Of Ecosonics

from the Preston-Guitry Duo

Ecosonic concepts are formulated around ideas of natural sonic environments; in the case of the human musician the combination of the physical means of producing sound, i.e., the performers' body and the instrument in combination with the expressive need to produce sound, is considered to be a natural sound environment or sonic ecosystem. The aim is to find means for this system to convey the spontaneous, virtually unmediated expression of the performer, just as expressive speech does for the speaker. The various forms of sonic output generated by the living creatures of the world are all considered as ecosonic systems, i.e., sonic ecosystems defined by the interaction between physiological and neuronal capacities and behavioral needs.

Created by Stephen Preston, this system is not based on conventional technique for playing the one-keyed flute or on any system of tonality. Instead, the one-keyed flute is treated according to its most fundamental form, as a tube with six holes. (The seventh hole covered by the key is usually treated as a "wild card.") On the baroque flute, conventional fingering means that when playing chromatically, fingerings often become very complex. The ecosonic system was created to produce improvisations based on birdsong. By not using fingering in a conventional sense the ecosonic system achieves a degree of volubility akin to that in birdsong. □

improvisation is a perfect place for sharing and experimenting with new ideas. To be accepted as a baroque flute player [with interests beyond] early music is unusual in itself, let alone having the opportunity to create an entirely new kind of music with such a legendary musician.

JR: What kind of "roles" (if any) do you play when you play together?

SP: I try not to develop a role but keep our positions both flexible and absolutely equal. We are a duo, not one person and a sidekick. We became a duo because of who we are and how we worked together. For me that is quite worrying in the sense that I have never come across another baroque flute player who has all Amara's qualities. She is not replaceable.

But going back to roles—in practice, it doesn't work out exactly as I idealize it. I have acquired a long history of performing and directing other musicians and I know I unconsciously push things my way. Of course, sometimes I am convinced I'm right, but idealistically I think it is essential we play equal roles. After all, I play with Amara because of the respect I have for her—so why should I treat her as a second fiddle? On top of that she is much more alert about many details than I am and she is more patient and methodical.

AG: Neither of us is replaceable; we have developed a way of working over time that has evolved along with our music making. Although we try to play equal roles, we do take turns in leading new experiments or new improvisations or particular ideas one of us might have. It is a continuous learning curve for us both in different ways, and in that sense, we are equals. We share a deep respect for one another, which aids in this process.

JR: Do you ever play with other instrumentalists?

SP: Yes, we are working with other instruments. We need to develop ecosonics so it doesn't get stuck as a quirky baroque flute thing. However, it isn't easy. The binary-arithmetic-based system which works so well on our flutes will not work on other instruments. We have to develop more universally applicable systems while maintaining the essence of ecosonics. So far we have worked with a pianist, a

(Cont'd on next page)



ECOSONICS (cont'd from previous page)

violinist, a guitarist and a cellist. All of them are rather special musicians—ecosonics requires courage, imagination and open-mindedness. The pianist is the English composer Edward Cowie, who was my supervisor when I was researching birdsong. He is an extraordinarily gifted man with great love and knowledge of birds. The guitarist, Richard Hand, plays a lot of new music, while the violinist, Pablo Beznosiuk, is not only a leading period instrument player but also a jazz enthusiast, particularly in the area of free improvisation. At the moment we are working most intensely with the cellist Thomas Gardner. Thomas is primarily an electroacoustic composer and we are exploring electroacoustic possibilities. But the essential point of contact is a shared interest in the physicality and immediacy of performance.

JR: Is it only birds that you are thinking about, or is there some other inspiration?

SP: Essentially birds, but we do think about other things too. First of all, we are artists, not music hall mimics, and we need creative space. Also we are interested in the sounds of animals in general. Ecosonics is sound created by movement and our improvisations are a response to the pleasure of sound and feeling—there is a great deal of pleasure in pure ecosonic improvisation.

JR: Have you listened back and thought it actually reminded you of some other kind of music? If so, what kind?

SP: Mostly no, I haven't been reminded of other music although some of our slow improvisations have been shakuhachi-like, and occasionally other more generalized musical similarities surface. These mostly happen in improvisations that are the least related to birdsong. But I created ecosonics because I found existing human musical languages did not suit what I was looking for.

JR: What is the audience reaction that you've received? Do you have any stories to share?

SP: In many, if not all concerts, audiences have told us that their favorite music in the concert has been the ecosonic improvisations. They say it has immediacy. We find it amusing that some people find it impossible to believe that we are really improvising and not working from scores. What audiences do tell us is that they love music that is communicated directly from the performers, that they don't need scores and scales.

JR: How do you think this music might develop in the future?

SP: There are a lot of things we can do with ecosonics. There is so much more we can learn from birdsong which will enrich the range and expression of our improvisations. There are many duetting and chorusing species whose songs we haven't explored. We are interested in bioacoustics generally and there are species to explore—frog chorusing for example. My priority at the moment is to develop ecosonics for other instruments and to establish an ensemble. Ecosonics is wonderful for education, creating strong links between the exploration of the natural world and human music-making. Improvisation with electroacoustics is another area we have investigated and we will be developing in the future.

AG: It is my hope that our ecosonic improvisation will continue developing in new and possibly unexpected ways for as long as it can. Also, it is our hope to share these techniques and ideas with other musicians and with audiences, including in an educational venue.

I know Stephen has had a wonderful collaboration with Edward Cowie, who has written an amazing piece for him making use of ecosonic technique. I have also had the pleasure of working with a few electroacoustic composers, and one in particular, Jo Thomas, who has written a piece using the technique in conjunction with more traditionally written-out music. I think ecosonics offers a unique and very different sound world for composers, although the mode of improvising is slightly altered by having written indications of when and sometimes how an improvisational

passage will occur. These techniques, without a doubt, expand the expressive possibilities of the baroque flute immensely. I think it could certainly be very exciting to both acoustic and electroacoustic composers.

JR: Do you have any goals with it? If so, what are they?

SP: I aim to get ecosonics established as a way of making and thinking about music in relation to the natural sound world. This would go beyond making birdsong fit into our current ways of making music, more towards creating a musical art based on listening to what birds do and learning from it as raw musical material.

JR: Can you talk a bit about how birdsong (and/or the sounds of other animals) has changed how you think about human constructs of music/sound—melody, harmony, rhythm and counterpoint?

SP: Ecosonics came about, ultimately, because the more I listened to birdsong the less I could hear many of the formal aspects of Western classical music and the more I felt it was as close to speech as to music. However, I should make it clear that I think that speech and music are more than just very closely related, but are probably aspects of the same attributes that developed along different paths. At an early stage in my work I looked for models on which to develop a notation that would record birdsong and my own experiments. The most interesting notation I found was that of neumes, which notated not exact pitches or note lengths but relative pitches, lengths and, most significantly, inflections of the voice. As I endeavored to find a musical means to grasp song I had to reflect on what I took for granted in music and on the human desire to categorize birdsong as more or less like human music. And I slowly realized a number of obvious facts which I can only summarize briefly and partially here. First of all our (Western) music has developed slowly and artificially over many hundreds of years, yet incredibly we think of it as natural even though the development has almost entirely taken place without investigation of the

natural world. We call on physics to prove our music is natural, but physics actually relates to the problems of constructing instruments and to justifying the way we construct our chords. Secondly, in performance ruled by the score, we only perform what is notated and we only perform in ways that are notatable. In that respect far too much of our music is like science before the advent of chaos and complexity theories—all the imponderables are ironed out.

It is important not to generalize about birds. Songs are like languages, only they are sonically, systematically and structurally much more diverse; there isn't one melody, system or structure in birdsong but as many different ones as there are species.

JR: What about the visual arts?

SP: A key moment in my research was when I started investigating Chinese painting for the concept and use of emptiness. At the time I was trying to develop the idea of the use of silence in my improvisations. It was this that led me via the *I Ching* to the use of binary arithmetic as the basis of ecosonic technique on the baroque flute. Also, I have a strong interest in visual arts, as I have two brothers who are both painters. One thing I would very much like to do is to collaborate with visual artists.

JR: And dance?

SP: Ecosonics was strongly influenced by the feeling of flow and movement. The accessibility of the technique to physical impulse is a key factor. Without my dance work, ecosonics would not be what it is—perhaps it wouldn't have come about at all.

Another key aspect in the development of ecosonics was speech as sonic gesture—the way our bodies move as we speak, the flow of feelings that generate that movement, and the way we express those feelings through speed, inflection, rhythm, dynamics, enunciation and color in the flow of speech.

JR: Do you experience any physical changes when improvising?

SP: There is most definitely a change that takes place, but it isn't just physical. What happens is a feeling of total

agreement between intention and action, of immediacy. Music happens—it flows out of the body creating an extraordinary feeling of lightness and fulfillment.

AG: There is certainly a difference between playing conventional music and ecosonic music for me. The physical changes that happen to many players, including myself, that can cause tension from many years of being encouraged to play the musical text “right” disappear when we are improvising. It is more direct expression, different from the slightly less direct expression of playing written music, where we are expressive ourselves of course, but we are also an avatar for the composer's work, and we share the responsibility between the two. Ecosonic improvisation is direct expression between the musicians who are improvising, with nothing in-between, and thus the physical and mental demands are different and much more natural.

JR: How does it influence, your interpretation of other music?

SP: Ecosonics is so unlike any other music, so in most ways there is no parallel. But it does remind you that [when interpreting music you are thinking about the where] and what and how of your playing, rather than just being in the music. Interpretation is a little like a veil which is always present in one or more ways, slightly obscuring the natural process of making music. By a veil, I mean any number of things—from the internal voice of the musician providing a commentary on the performance, assessing, calculating, evaluating, to the aural perceptions of the audience.

AG: Improvising with ecosonics reminds me of the need to try always to keep looking at our musical performance in new ways. With improvising, it is impossible to reproduce a performance we have given in the past. We must work hard to keep renewing our improvisation to prevent it from becoming stale and unintentionally becoming predictable (at least to each other, if not to an audience which may not have heard us before).

It makes me wonder more and more about how often one chooses a particular interpretation for a piece of written music, and sticks to it indefinitely. I would like to think that in playing

traditional music, I can become as open in thinking about musical performance and all its myriad possibilities as I am in ecosonic improvisation.

JR: How does your knowledge of 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century music inform the creation of music you're creating now, today? How is it different? What is new about it? What kinds of changes are made to the music and your instrument that are clearly 20th- and 21st-century philosophies/methods/ideas?

AG: I certainly give a great amount of credit in inventing new techniques to 18th- and 19th-century flute tutors. There is a great basis for expanding our repertoire of articulations, especially. And I, of course, have Stephen to thank for a great deal of my practical historical knowledge. We of course use historical techniques in drastically different ways in 21st-century improvising, but much of the basis can be found in the extraordinary variety of ideas on what is expressive on the flute historically. Even though the early music movement is still quite young, it is already experiencing a turn toward “tradition” rather than experiment, and that is a pity. For us, I think we try to use as much as possible from the vast sea of information on historical playing, and extend it into new sound worlds for our own contemporary music making.

JR: Thank you... and I hope all our readers will come (and bring their friends!) to your January 22nd concert. It will be a rare treat to hear and see this one-of-a-kind musical language and to see for ourselves what ecosonics is all about. □

Jane Rigler—flutist, composer, improviser, educator, and producer—performs in contemporary and experimental music festivals throughout the United States and Europe. Details on her activities can be found at www.janerigler.com.

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From the Editor

Happy New Year!

The first Club event for 2006 will be an introduction to Ecosonics by the baroque flute duo of Stephen Preston and Amara Guitry on January 22. What is Ecosonics? you might wonder. Jane Rigler's interview will give you some answers, but take her advice and read the "Ecosonics" sidebar on page five first. I'm looking forward to hearing some birdsong-inspired improvisations, and trying to keep my mind open to the idea that the sounds animals make can teach us something about music. And Jane, excited after hearing the duo's CD,

says, "I think they move the baroque flute out of its box—people need to hear this."

Dave Wechsler's "From the President" was prompted by member questions about the gadgetry behind the music for flute and electronics we've been hearing recently. News to me (and maybe to anyone else unfamiliar with the early history of electronic music): there were electronic instruments in existence well before the beginning of the 20th century! Live and learn.

This month's member profile subject is Michael A. Laderman, a professional flutist and High School of Performing Arts graduate. Every profile gives me different facts to check out: this one led me to the wild plots of two recently premiered operas and to the identity of the dedicatee of Ezra Laderman's "Michael's Piece."

Anyway, all for now. See you soon.

Best regards,

Katherine Saenger (klsaenger@yahoo.com)