

June in Buffalo: music and the visual image

The art of combining music with visual images has blossomed in the 20th century, permeating our culture. Disney's *Fantasia*, MTV, the Internet: the "information age" has produced novel ways for music to interact with speech, video, and animation, resulting in media fusions previously unimagined.

This year's *June in Buffalo* festival (June 2 through 7) chooses "Music and the Visual Image" as its theme. Some works on the program are multimedia projects, while others have their origins in multimedia collaborations. The featured composers — Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Tony Conrad, John Corigliano, Charles Wuorinen, and David Felder — have all been involved in multimedia in one way or another.

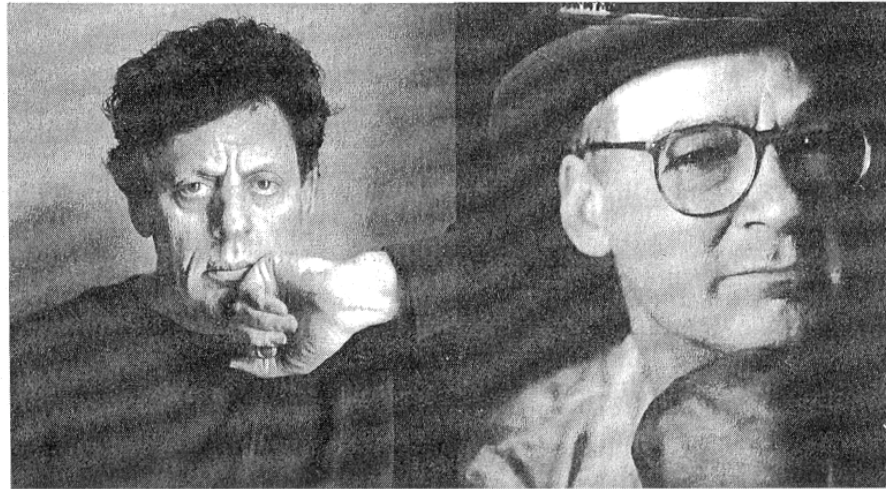
On the outside, *June in Buffalo*, started by Morton Feldman in 1975, is a week of contemporary music concerts hosted by the University at Buffalo. On the inside, it's a conference of workshops that bring younger composers in contact with more established ones. As for the styles of the younger composers participating this year, artistic director David Felder says "whatever map you have, they would be all over it."

The afternoon concerts feature these younger composers' music, while the evening concerts are devoted to music of the more established composers. Lectures by the established composers occur each morning.

Philip Glass's music is the focus of Monday evening's events. Screenings of the film *Naqoyqatsi* (Life as War), at 6 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., flank a performance of Glass's *Symphony No. 3* (1995). *Naqoyqatsi*, released by Miramax Films in 2002, is the finale of the *Qatsi Trilogy* begun 25 years ago by Glass and film director Godfrey Reggio.

Glass's soundtrack is scored for a mixed orchestral ensemble with voice and a prominent solo cello part played by Yo-Yo Ma. Among the features that distinguish this particular Glass score are syncopated jazzy rhythms and prominent drums and percussion.

As a prelude to Monday evening's concert,



Classical and underground minimalists: Philip Glass and Tony Conrad participate in this year's *June in Buffalo*.

Classical

by Josh Mailman

two flutists will perform Glass's early *Piece in the Shape of a Square* (1967) — a pun on Satie's *Three Pieces in the Form of a Pear* (1903). Friday, June 6th's evening concert features Glass's *Quartet No. 3* (Mishima) (1985).

Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's *Three Tales*, presented on Wednesday, June 4, truly earns the label "multi-media." It's a "digital documentary opera" interpreting the role of technology in the 20th century.

The old chestnut *Piano Phase* (1967) and the more recent *Triple Quartet* (1999) complete Wednesday evening's all-Reich program. As does Boulez's *Sur Incises* (1996-98, for three trios) and Reich's *Triple Quartet* (for three quartets), which demonstrates a mature composer's reintegration of Bartók's savage rhythmic and harmonic energy into his own style. Musicians

from the Eastman School will participate in the performance led by Brad Lubman.

Some of the greatest multimedia artworks of the 20th century are the collaborations between Igor Stravinsky and choreographer George Balanchine — even sculptor Isamu Noguchi joined them as set and costume designer for their ballet *Orpheus* (1948).

Composer Charles Wuorinen, who claims Stravinsky as a decisive influence, and Balanchine's successor Peter Martins have continued that tradition in their own series of collaborations for New York City Ballet.

"Wuorinen's music is just so incredibly well made and beautiful, but in a completely different way [than Reich's]," Felder says. "I am anxious to hear each new piece that he writes. I follow only a handful of composers, and he is at the top of my list."

Tuesday evening's 7 p.m. concert is a "double feature" in which Wuorinen is represented by his *Dante Trilogy* (1993 to 1996), a

work commissioned by New York City Ballet for choreography by Peter Martins. The three parts of the work can be, and usually are, performed separately. Tuesday's concert is a rare opportunity to hear the complete trilogy, though without the dance.

The first part, *Mission of Virgil*, will be performed in its two-piano version. *The Great Procession* (1995) and *River of Light* (1996), the remaining parts of Wuorinen's *Dante Trilogy*, will be performed in their chamber orchestral versions by the New York New Music Ensemble and the Slee Sinfonietta.

The second half of Tuesday evening's "double feature" is a pair of works: *Chiaroscuro*, a soundscape for two pianos tuned a quarter-tone apart, and *Troubadours: Variations for Guitar and Chamber Orchestra* by John Corigliano.

The concert on Thursday evening, June 5, features an intriguing work called *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* in which, as the title suggests, Corigliano re-sets Dylan's lyrics to completely new music.

On Saturday evening, June 7, at 7pm, the festival culminates not with multimedia, but with a performance by violinist and sound artist Tony Conrad, a fixture of the Western New York experimental music scene and one of the innovators of early minimalism in the mid-1960s. Conrad's ensemble, *Augenmusik*, will perform works dating from the 1950s to the present involving graphic scores or open forms. Among the composers whose music is featured are John Cage, Earle Brown, Christian Wolff, and Cornelius Cardew. On the other half of the program, Conrad will sculpt his own sound performance. ■

June in Buffalo: 12 concerts in the afternoons and evenings of Monday, June 2, through Saturday, June 7. For more info about the music as well as performance times, ticket prices, and directions to the University at Buffalo North Campus, visit www.music.buffalo.edu/juneinbuffalo or call 716-645.2765 x1254.