

KAMRAN INCE

Hammers and Whistlers **Curve • Istathenople • Strange Stone**

Present Music Ensemble
Milwaukee Children's Choir and Choral Artists
Milwaukee Youth Symphony String Orchestra
Kevin Stalheim



Kamran Ince (b. 1960)

Curve • Hammers and Whistlers • Isthathenople • Strange Stone

Again and again in piece after piece, Kamran Ince expresses spiritual longing in the simplest and most time-honored way: By placing half-steps and whole steps in close proximity. The difference was poignant when Monteverdi and friends experimented with it c. 1600, and it remains so today.

Ince, however, does not merely repeat a well-worn strategy. His stark way of framing and rich way of coloring these basic intervals sharpens their emotional edges and updates a time-honored device.

The ache touches home, especially, at the outset of *Curve*, Ince's string quartet. Ince wrote the piece for the Ceruti String Quartet, which premiered it at Carnegie Hall in 1997.

The tentative, irregular seconds – major here, minor there, consonant here, dissonant there – quiver as they reach toward but never quite achieve real melody. The sentiment of this bit of music is not so much sadness as emotional paralysis, which is sadder than sadness. The asymmetrical pounding ostinati and the surreal rock 'n' roll rave-up violin solo that follow read as outbursts of frustration and anxiety.

Curve, along with *Domes* (1992) and *Arches* (1994), reflects the composer's preoccupation with architectural shapes associated with spirituality.

Hammers and Whistlers begins with a heavenly, treble clamor of woodwinds and the voices of women and children. For the next 22 minutes of this 2006 piece, Ince astonishes the ear. The stream-of-consciousness whirl, built around a surreal poem by Izzeddin Calislar, includes jangle and clatter and avian chirping, iron-foundry pounding, bedlams of overlapping melodies and all manner of alarms and cries. Calm, quiet choral chants butt against crashing gongs and blasting brass rising from children's choir, women's choir, a string orchestra, and a percussion-heavy ensemble of fifteen.

These lines from Calislar's poem sum up this thrilling music:

*sing or whisper
crazy or sane
no limit*

In *Isthathenople*, Ince runs two distinct ideas, one driving and virtuosic, the other placid and glowing, through some of the many musical genres that have influenced him: Balkan, Turkish and Greek traditional music, rock and pop, European modernism and American Minimalism.

The ten-piece band includes bouzuki, mandolin and electronic keyboard. Ince's unique colors make even the most basic harmonies fascinating. Bathe a major third rocking to a minor third in gorgeous, shifting colors and you can listen to them all night.

You'd expect *Isthathenople* to be a musical Tower of Babel, but simple, instantly recognizable materials hold the piece together. It is ever changing but ever the same; ideas heard at the outset return in colorful new clothes and dance slightly different steps. It's fun to compare the iterations and impossible not to be swept up in the overall rising energy. At the end, just when it couldn't get any more raucous and energetic, *Isthathenople* turns gloriously and soothingly beautiful.

The singer, Hadass Pal-Yarden, put something of herself into that ending: A few lines from the Old Testament Song of Solomon.

<i>mi zot ala</i>	<i>Whom is she who is rising up</i>
<i>min haminbar</i>	<i>From the desert</i>
<i>ketimerot ashan</i>	<i>Like smoking billows</i>
<i>ketimerot ashan</i>	<i>Like smoking billows</i>
<i>mi zot ala</i>	<i>Whom is she who is rising up</i>
<i>min hamidbar</i>	<i>From the desert</i>

"She did this on her own," Ince said. "When I heard it,

I knew it had to stay in there.”

This disc offers spiritual longing, audacious celebration and brilliant homage and finishes with antic comedy.

Strange Stone (2004), according to the composer, “represents the new-music equivalent of the traditional Turkish zurna,” a notably loud, rowdy and nasal wind instrument. Fine, but the rest of us will hear the slide whistle, the herky-jerky melodies, the scampering winds chased by a waddling bassoon and the meowing glissando strings and think: Looney Tunes.

No spiritual yearning in *Strange Stone*; this one is pure, audacious fun.

“I was going for the blur of Ottoman classical music washed with the in-your-faceness of the zurna sound, to create a synthesis of the two,” the composer writes. “I warped the classical horizontally and vertically – horizontally with what I call spice and dirt and vertically with the out-of-sync quality.”

“I am turning more to Turkish music. I am particularly interested in contrasting Turkish folk music with Ottoman classical music. The playful and surprising aspect of the folk music, and the depth, weight and elegance of Ottoman courtly music capture me. I’ve explored these two sides before, but the ingredients are changing. Maybe I’m going more toward my core.”

Present Music, the Milwaukee new-music organization led by Kevin Stalheim, commissioned and premiered *Hammers and Whistlers* (in 2006) and *Istathenople* (in 2003). Ince and Present Music have had a long and fruitful relationship that has included many commissions and a tour of Turkey. The Milwaukee Choral Artists, the Milwaukee Children’s Choir and the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra Strings joined the Present Music ensemble in this performance of *Hammers and Whistlers*.

Tom Strini

Photo of Kamran Ince by Merih Akogul (used by permission)





Present Music Ensemble

Internationally acclaimed and celebrating twenty-eight years of new music, Present Music commissions, performs, records, and tours the music of living composers. In the past quarter century, more than fifty new works, by composers from around the world, have come into existence because of Present Music. Founded by Kevin Stalheim, Present Music works closely with many of the world's most exciting and significant composers while supporting the talents of emerging voices. It also nurtures the next generation of composers through its education program, the Creation Project. Present Music marks its 28th season with a heightened commitment to emerging

composers, exciting visiting artists, and a host of collaborations that turn our concerts into events. Present Music has toured extensively throughout the United States and has participated in major international music festivals, including performances in Japan, China, and Turkey. Most recently, Present Music toured to New York to perform at the prestigious Composer Portrait Series at Columbia University. Currently, Present Music can be heard on nine compact disc recordings that include composers Kamran Ince, Michael Torke, Daniel Lentz, Henry Brant, Jerome Kitzke, Kimmo Hakola, Elena Kats-Chernin, and Armando Luna.



Kevin Stalheim

Kevin Stalheim is founder and Artistic Director of Present Music. Committed to commissioning new work and supporting residencies, he has worked closely and extensively with many of the most important composers of our time. Through Stalheim's considerable efforts, Present Music – currently celebrating 28 years – is now regarded as one of the foremost national organizations in the development and presentation of *new music*. Among Stalheim's accolades and honors are the City of Milwaukee Arts Board's 2002 "Artist of the Year" award, the Civic Music Association's 2001 "Distinguished Citizen Award" and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's nod as 1989 "Musician of the Year." Stalheim received his Bachelor of Music from Oberlin Conservatory, Oberlin, OH in 1976, and his Master of Music from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1981.

Hammers and Whistlers

by Izzeddin Çalişlar with Kamran Ince

now
take a pause
but
make this the last!
then you'll begin to create
and then you'll never stop
you'll keep creating
that's why
you have to take a pause now
in this hall
you will discover
finding
sharing
now

sing or whisper
crazy or sane
no limit
go on
something by you

(shouting ...)

yes
I can create
myself!
yes
I can feel it
I can create
myself!
now
yes

(whistles ...)

huge or tiny
quiet
hard or easy
earth

whisper
noisy
distant or close
cheerful or sad
moving
deep or shallow

(whistles ...)

many or few
grand or humble
words

(whistles ...)

(unintelligible whispers ...)

your voice is a world
(unintelligible shouting ...)

yes
now

a voice implies all the reality
it makes all the senses real
this is the way to be human
do you want to share them?
do you really want to share them?

do you want to have the senses
do you want to feel all the senses
do you want to keep the senses
do you want to share the senses
do you?

you've been created to be creative
do you have a right to stop creation?
all these whisperers
and the whistlers
are the creations of the creator
all these creations

so I'm creative
even when I'm playing in the garden
and the humanity
will be unconsciously a part of me
if you don't like others' thoughts
then create new ones your self
if you don't care about what was done before
you must create something new
which belongs only to you

you took a pause
but that will be the last
and now you'll keep creating
now you'll never stop
if you let it
it will always come to you
now share with others
what you've found
and can give
you've now discovered
how to find
to share
now

isn't it funny?
yes
isn't it ugly?
and pretty?
yes
and a little sad

(normal alphabet mixed with made-up letters)

a, b, c, zty, jtu, me, zvr, trah,
d, jky, kyf, tha, e, knu, f, e,
shr, ktu, dzoh, mr, g, mrah, h,
i, shy, j, lay, k, hyu, bdoh, drah,
hiy, l, ktay, m, zyl, syt, n, rsu,
o, tsu, ort, jky, p, syf, lki, q,

mnoh, r, kyr, ykl, s, t, tay,
vr, fij, kut, w, mry,
nmuh, kleih, u, vr, ou,
eit, v, w, tys,
x, y, z

once upon a time
man kind
made the alphabet
from nails
sounds became nails
and then the letters
then found one
which created zero
then came
microchips

at the beginning
there was only
"the voice"
at the end there will remain only
"the voice"
only
"the voice"
will remain
only
"the voice"

The audacious music of Kamran Ince embraces folk and classical traditions of Turkey, European modernism, Minimalism and many forms of pop, rock and jazz. The music reflects the man's varied background: the Turkish-American composer grew up partly in both countries, soaking up traditional music and pop. In his music, many styles collide and overlap. The most delicate beauty collides with the rowdiest sounds this side of heavy metal; startling contrast is a hallmark of Ince's style. It is impossible to listen to Ince's music casually. It commands attention. It shakes you.

Kamran INCE

(b. 1960)

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|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Curve (1997) * | 14:47 |
| 2 | Hammers and Whistlers (2006)
Text by Izzeddin Çalişlar (b. 1964) | 22:31 |
| 3 | Istathenople (2003) | 18:12 |
| 4 | Strange Stone (2004) | 12:54 |

Present Music Ensemble

* Leventhal, Sharan violin I • Segnitz, Eric violin II
 Renzelman, Brek viola • Lavine, Karl cello
 Milwaukee Children's Choir ² • Milwaukee Choral Artists ²
 Milwaukee Youth Symphony String Orchestra ²
 Hadass Pal-Yarden, ethnic voice ³
 Neva Özgen, kemenche ³ • Ali Çabuk, bouzouki ³
 Kevin Stalheim, conductor ²⁻⁴

Recorded at Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, May 2008 (track 1) and November 2007 (4); in St John's Cathedral, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, November 2006 (2); and at the University of Memphis Scheidt School of Music, Memphis, Tennessee, USA, March 2004 (3)

Producers: Rick Probst (1, 2 & 4); Jeff Cline & Kamran Ince (3) • Engineers: Rick Probst (1, 2 & 4); Jeff Cline (3) • Editors: Rick Probst (1 & 4); Pieter Snapper (2); Brandon Goff (3) • Mastering: Rick Probst

Publisher: Schott Music Corporation • Booklet notes: Tom Strini

Cover Photo: Goreme, Cappadocia, Turkey (© Salajejan / Dreamstime.com)



9.70122

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Playing Time
68:33



Made in Germany
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Booklet notes and sung text in English