



RYAN STREIBER

CONCENTRIC

1. **STRING QUARTET**

(2010, rev. 2014) {11:28}

Recorded March 13, 2014 at Oktaven Audio. Ryan Streber – engineer
Daniel Lippel and Ryan Streber – session producers

counter)induction: Miranda Cuckson, Erik Carlson – violins
Jessica Meyer – viola; Karen Ouzounian – 'cello

2. **COLD PASTORAL**

(2004) {8:50}

Recorded April 28, 2006 at Mix-O-Lydian Studios, NJ.
Michael Rice – engineer; Ryan Streber – session producer

Line C3 Percussion Quartet: Haruka Fujii, Chris Thompson,
John Ostrowski, Sam Solomon

3-5. **SHADOW ETUDES**

(2013)

- 3. I. Wheel Variations {3:38}
- 4. II. l'Ombre d'un Papillon {3:38}
- 5. III. Two to One {2:41}

Recorded October 11, 2013 at Oktaven Audio. Ryan Streber – engineer and session producer

counter)induction: Ben Fingland – clarinets; Jessica Meyer – viola

6. **DESCENT**

(2007) {10:33}

Recorded January 9, 2009 in Sweeney Auditorium, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
Ryan Streber – engineer; Daniel Lippel and Ryan Streber – session producers; Daniel Lippel – editing producer

Daniel Lippel – electric guitar

7. **COMPASSINGES**

(2003) {7:58}

Recorded March 30, 2007 (quartet) and April 22, 2007 (percussion) at 6 Southcrest, Huntington, NY.
Ryan Streber – engineer

Sam Solomon – percussion; Kristy Errera-Solomon – voice; David Fulmer, Keats
Dieffenbach – violins; Nadia Sirota – viola; Clarice Jensen – 'cello
Ryan Streber – electric guitar

8-10. **DUST SHELTER**

(2005)

- 8. I.{7:56}
- 9. II.{7:15}
- 10. III.{8:57}

Recorded February 25, 2007 at 6 Southcrest, Huntington NY. Ryan Streber – engineer
Daniel Lippel and Ryan Streber – session producers

Alex Sopp – flute; Nadia Sirota – viola; Clarice Jensen – 'cello

Total time: 72:56

All tracks edited, mixed, and mastered by Ryan Streber at Oktaven Audio, Yonkers, NY.
www.oktavenaudio.com

Jessica Slaven – artwork and design

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The starting point for the **STRING QUARTET** (2010 / 2014) was the Latin word “repexus” which roughly translates as combed-out, untangled, or arranged. The piece traces various sorts of untangling and re-arranging – of intervallic and rhythmic cells as well as instrumental identities. Solo lines and small ensembles are lost in or subsumed by dense tutti chords or polyphonic textures, and these are separated out in turn into their component parts to reveal new relationships and roles. The quartet was commissioned by ACME.

COLD PASTORAL (2004) was composed for Line C3 Percussion Quartet. In performance, the group is split into two duos, one sharing a set of crotales and one sharing a vibraphone. This arrangement results in a beautiful visual and spatial symmetry with each pair facing each other around their core instrument and suggests a quiet and intimate exchange amongst partners. Although the title comes from John Keats’ famous “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, the piece relates to this evocative phrase itself, removed from the context of the poem.

Each of the three **SHADOW ETUDES** (2013) for viola and clarinet explores a variety of musical interpretations of the diverse notions of shadow. Written for Jessica Meyer, Benjamin Fingland, and counter) induction, the three short movements play with the mutable identities and interactions of the two instruments. Their relationship to one another is ever-evolving: at times clear hierarchies are established only to be overturned; unities are achieved that subsequently dissolve; one voice’s clarity is overshadowed by the other’s shade or opacity. However, the two partners eventually meld into a singularity in the end.

DESCENT (2008) for solo electric guitar was written for Dan Lippel. Its title refers primarily to the piece’s gradual movement from a high tessitura to an unusually low one. An alternate tuning is used to lower

the guitar’s range down to a C. However, through the use of a capo for the first half of the piece, this lower register is initially withheld. This course is paralleled by another continuous progression from a relatively “clean” amplified sound in the beginning to a very distorted and compressed sound by the work’s conclusion. The piece loosely has its extramusical roots in Rilke’s poem “Orpheus. Euridice. Hermes.”

COMPASSINGES (2003) takes its title from Chaucer’s description of the marginalia of gothic art and architecture; the word itself is an elision of two words—compass (signifying geometrical design) and singes (monkeys)—and it refers to the distinctly secular images and objects that commonly inhabited the fringes of sacred medieval art. The slower parts of the piece were originally an independent song setting of A.R. Ammons’ poem “Love Song (I)”. The song fragments are interwoven with agitated and contrapuntal sections whose lively, even aggressive irreverence colors the song’s lyricism. Compassinges was written for percussionist Sam Solomon and was originally performed as a percussion solo with the pre-recorded and processed string, voice, and guitar parts played back over a four-channel speaker system.

DUST SHELTER (2005) for flute, viola, and ‘cello was written for violist Nadia Sirota. Its title comes from a book of prints by artist Caitlin Swaim about a tiny cemetery in a remote and barren part of Western Colorado. Although much of the music is marked by contrapuntal textures in which all three players share an equal role, the violist is really the protagonist of the piece. The second movement frames a cadenza-like passage for viola with a sparse drone-accompaniment in the alto-flute and ‘cello. This is the heart of the work, summarizing much of the piece’s musical discourse; it is also where the music comes closest to a “tone-painting” translation of the prints.

CONCENTRIC

The pieces on this album were written over a span of 10 years and were each conceived as independent works within their own particular contexts. Yet they all have features – formal, technical, extra-musical, etc. – that articulate concentric designs or tendencies. The intimation through musical time of such a non-temporal idea as concentricity is something that fascinates me, as is the way in which a piece can simultaneously tell a linear narrative while still invoking a cyclical or center-oriented continuity. In their own ways, all of the works on this album engage in this interplay.

Concentricity takes on a physical and visual guise in *Cold Pastoral* where the four players' symmetrical disposition around a small collection of shared instruments focuses their interaction on a collective median. There is an element of this in the musical material as well, as the pitch and rhythmic structures seem to float, mobile-like around a handful of harmonic, melodic, and timbral axes.

Compassinges has a short song setting of A.R. Ammons' poem "Love Song (I)" as its axial thread. Originally an independent piece that predated *Compassinges*, the song is like a devotional text at the center of a page whose margins are crowded by surreal and even grotesque characters and commentaries. The voice of the song is a ghostly presence, drifting in and out of obscurity behind the solo percussion and electronically-manipulated strings.

In both *Compassinges* and *Descent*, a solo protagonist occupies a central position amongst electrical sonic elements that extend, counterpoint, or alter the character of the featured instrument. In *Compassinges*, the percussionist spars with but eventually melds into the electro-acoustic accompaniment. The process is more native

and linear in *Descent*, with the increasingly-distorted amplification of the electric guitar providing an opening for a progressive expansion and widening of the instrument's innate sound. But despite the linearity of its arc, there are ways in which *Descent's* lines circle a common mean. For example, the chords that recur throughout the piece (from its opening sound to its final moments) progress cyclically through a range of increasing, then decreasing durations, their end nearing a return to the opening. The piece is also a meditation on Rilke's poem "Orpheus. Euridice. Hermes.", and the landscapes, divided senses and temporalities, and inevitable fates of the poem's characters are like a core around which the piece treads.

The single-movement *String Quartet* as well as the three-movement trio *Dust Shelter* and three *Shadow Etudes* all have in common a middle section or movement characterized by slow, sparse, and delicate music. At the center of the *String Quartet*, a slow and diaphanous texture of quasi-improvised sound fragments provide an accompaniment to an intimate but restrained violin melody, detangling many of the piece's multiple strands. In the *Etudes*, the middle movement is a wispy and ephemeral aria for viola with the bass clarinet acting as its shadow. At the core of *Dust Shelter's* second movement – and at the heart of the work as a whole – is an extended viola cadenza that serves as its emotional and thematic summation. In these central moments, the pieces' dramatic and expressive energies turn most inward and concentrated – nearly-still points from which the rest of the works' paths radiate.

–Ryan Streber, 2014

THANKS

Special thanks to Jessica Slaven, Dan Lippel, counter)induction, Erik Carlson, Line C3, Sam Solomon, Nadia Sirota, Clarice Jensen, Alex Sopp, Caitlin Swaim, Jude Vaclavik, Chris Rouse, and Milton Babbitt. Extra Special thanks to Pat and Skip, Bev, Jason, Jeff, Stan, and my entire endlessly-supportive family.



2014 · NEW FOCUS RECORDINGS · FCRI155

STRING QUARTET ·

counter)induction

COLD PASTORAL ·

Line C3 Percussion Quartet

SHADOW ETUDES ·

Ben Fingland – clarinets; Jessica Meyer –

DESCENT ·

Daniel Lippel – electric guitar

COMPASSINGES ·

Sam Solomon – percussion

DUST SHELTER ·

Alex Sopp – flute; Nadia Sirota – viola
Clarice Jensen – ‘cello



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