

Last Words: Eight Death Poems  
For Ryoko

Last Words is a study in decay - in endings. The texts are the deathbed writings of eight separate Japanese poets, each poem given its own movement in the piece and exploring a different textural possibility. Special thanks to Ryoko Amadee Goguen for her help and participation.

Text:

1. Besho  
tabi ni yande  
yume wa karen o  
kakemeguru  
2. Yaohiko  
higashi e mo  
nishi e mo yukaji  
hana no kumo  
3. Tenko  
kege nuguu  
tsuki ya morederu  
kumo no sode  
4. Yayu  
kino kyo to  
omotsuuru karushi  
mi no hodo zo  
nakanaka nagaki  
yow a kazoemuru  
5. Chofo  
hito koishi  
hito mtsukashi  
aki no kure  
6. Mitoku  
mune suzushi  
kie o matsugo no  
mizu no awa  
7. Setsudo  
ima zo kuru  
nori no tabiji no  
hanagoromo  
8. Shiei  
kono toki no  
sewa o oshie no  
mujo kana

on a journey, ill:  
my dream goes wandering  
over withered fields

clouds of flowers  
fall not knowing  
east or west

the moon leaks out  
from sleeves of clouds  
and scattered shadows

yesterday? Today?  
thus death revolved within my  
thoughts

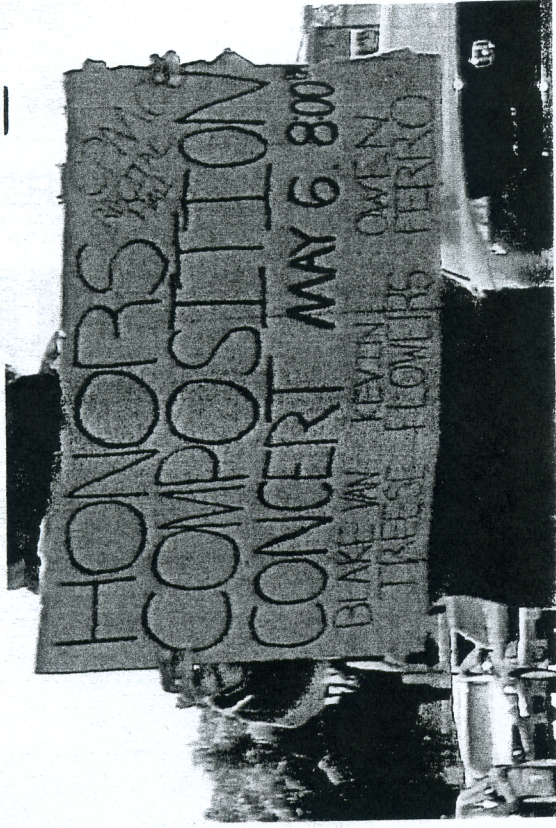
my fruitless days wore on-  
many indeed have been  
the years I've lived through

I long for people-  
then I loathe them:  
end of autumn

the foam of the last water  
has dissolved  
my mind is clear

now then,  
for my journey to the yonder world  
I shall wear a gown of flowers

of such a time as this  
the proverb speaks:  
this, too, shall pass



May 6, 2010 Conrad Prebys Recital Hall

Kevin Flowers:

*Beethoven Piano Sonata*

is a set of variations in which I explore various applications of just intonation principles. The superficial contrasts between each variation disguise the latent "theme."

The piece is very personal for me as I wrote it for my own instrumental and technical capabilities.

I would like to thank Melissa Stanley for her trust and patience during the compositional process and Matt Wohl for our indefatigable talks about harmonics and music.

*Strange Dialect* for six players

*Strange Dialect* was born out of a desire to move my writing away from the influence of speech - or more specifically language - and create a method based on the interplay of textures. I found the possibilities very exciting when I approached the music in this way; it presented me with a lot of new and interesting musical decisions to make. Many thanks go to Prof. Rand Steiger for his many valuable insights which helped me in sculpting the piece.

Performers:

1. Beethoven Piano Sonata

Kevin Flowers and Melissa Stanley

2. Beja Flor:

Curt Miller - clarinet  
Ryan Pon - flute  
Bakya MacAdam-Somer - violin  
Grabrielle Athayde - cello

3. Saturation (Greyscale)

Kimberly Turney - flute  
Ariana Lamon-Anderson - bass clarinet  
Brendan Nguyen - piano  
Stephen Solook - percussion  
Bakya MacAdam-Somer - violin  
Grabrielle Athayde - cello

4. Strange Dialect

Kimberly Turney - flute  
Ariana Lamon-Anderson - clarinets  
Brendan Nguyen - piano  
Stephen Solook - percussion  
Bakya MacAdam-Somer - violin  
Grabrielle Athayde - cello

5. Looking up

Kimberly Turney - piccolo, flute, bass flute  
Ariana Lamon-Anderson - clarinet  
Aleck Karis - piano  
Stephen Solook - percussion  
Bakya MacAdam-Somer - violin  
Grabrielle Athayde - cello

6. Grey Petals

Kevin Flowers - Guitar

7. Last Words

Ryoko Amadee Goguen - Voice  
Owen Ferro - Sounds

## Blake Van Treese:

Beja Flor

Beja Flor (Flower Kisser) is the Brazilian word for hummingbird. The literal translation into English being "flower kisser". This poetic translation of the word is a profound metaphor which barely begins to approach a description of the majesty of this creature. This piece explores two species of hummingbird studied in the Brazilian rain forest whose calls and behaviors were documented in a study which lasted 15 years. These calls were spectrally scrutinized and examined for repetition of material and variation of material. These findings concluded that the hummingbird calls were very much species specific and also contained vastly different characteristics and structures. These calls are grouped into short songs which are referred to in the study as "bouts". I compared and contrasted the two very short bouts, one from each species, and proceeded to derive melodic material based on these spectrograms of about 4 seconds in duration. Instead of devising melodies based on specific frequencies of the spectrogram, I simply followed the contours of the graph and created melodies which mimicked the graphs visually.

It was important for me to try to metaphorically portray the hummingbird without venturing into mimicry. By expressing duality in the music, which is directly correlated to the two state lives of hummingbirds, I was able to approach this dilemma. Given their extremely high metabolism and rapid heart rate, hummingbirds can only fly for a matter of 10 minutes before they burn up the fuel that they have stored. In order to survive at night, hummingbirds retreat into a state called "torpor" where their metabolism slows down immensely and their heart rate reaches a tempo close to our own. This is a remarkable feat considering that there normal heart rate can reach ten entire beats per second. The urgency created in the middle section of the piece directly reflects the desperate need for nectar which is found in small doses at three points in the piece, the last of which provides enough nectar to return to torpor. Hummingbirds also have the very rare ability to fly backwards. They can be flying at 50 mph and almost instantaneously reverse flight direction. This unique attribute was manifested in the many uses of retrograde inversion and palindromic melodies.

## Looking Up

Looking Up is a piece that explores a six note pitch set and it's counterparts. It seeks to provide meaning to these pitches through uses of orchestration, transformation, articulation, modulation, thematic development, and dynamic contrasts. The fibonacci sequence also plays a large role in the overall form and trajectory of the piece. The piece consists of precisely 233 measures, at each fibonacci number in the sequence, the counter pitch set is presented and is often introduced without preparation, accompanied by a rumbling glissando with the finger over the low register inside the piano.

## Grey Petals

Grey Petals is a composition written for Kevin Gray Flowers which explores the deconstruction of a common guitar technique using a unique modal language devised for the piece.

1. *Beethoven Piano Sonata* - Kevin Flowers

- I. Tema
- II. Rondo
- III. Menuetto
- IV. Trio-Canon
- V. Aria
- VI. Quodlibet
- VII. Tema

2. *Beja Flor* - Blake Van Treese

3. *Saturation (greyscale)* - Owen Ferro

4. *Strange Dialect* - Kevin Flowers

Intermission

5. *Looking Up* - Blake Van Treese

6. *Grey Pedals* - Blake Van Treese

7. *Last Words* - Owen Ferro

Owen Ferro:

Saturation (greyscale)

Taken from color theory, *saturation* refers to the intensity of a color within itself - i.e. how red is a red. As the title of this piece it uses this visual categorization as a metaphor for the filling of sonic space by the overlapping and reorganization of three musical textures, each of which moves through a transposed seven note chromatic pitch-set upon every consecutive entrance. At the nexus of capacity the stratified sections disintegrate to leave only the fragmented gestures that marked sporadic events within the process of thickening saturation.

As saturation is used to describe the constant build up of a relatively unchanging harmonic texture, *greyscale*, also borrowed from color theory and meaning the removal of color from a photo to render it black and white, is used to describe the subsequent space where in only the demarcating events exist outside of the background of omni-instrumental color. As the contrasting greyscale section is a sort of filtering of previous material, it shares the additive growth trait of the previous section of the piece, ending in a return to the initial level of instrumental saturation.