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. Basho
tabi ni yande
yume wa kareno o
kakemeguru

2. Yasuhiko
higashi e mo
nishi e mo yukuji
hana no kumo

3. Tanka
kage nugu
tsuki ya morederu
kumo no sode

4. Yayu
kino kyo to
omoitesu no karashi
mi no hodo zo
nakamata nagaki
yow a kaze enuru

5. Chigo
hito koishi
hito muku kashi
aki no kure

6. Mitoku
mune suzushi
kike o matsugo no
mizu no awa

7. Shinsudo
ima zo kiru
nori no tabi zo no
hanagoromo

8. Shiel
cono toki no
sowa o osobi 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 were 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
soulbath in themes which helped me in
valuable insights which helped me in
thanks to Pratt, Rand, Stelter, for his many
interesting musical decisions to make. Many
way: It presented me with a lot of new and
exciting when I approached the music in this
of textures. I found the possibilities very
and created a method based on the interpreter
- and moved my writing away from the influence
Strange Dialect was born out of a desire

Strange Dialect for six players

harmonious and musical.
for our indistinguishable words about
compositional processes and material world
be subverted and affirmed during the
time
I would like to thank Michelle Stanley for

Strange Dialect

the piece

for my own instrumental and technical
The piece is very personal to me as I wrote it
variation of the theme "The Space"
was a set of variations in which I explore various

Beethoven Piano Sonata

Kevin Powers:
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 16 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 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 "bouti". 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 these 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 its 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. Thema
   II. Rondo
   III. Menuetto
   IV. Trio-Canon
   V. Aria
   VI. Quodlibet
   VII. Thema

2. Baja Flor - Blake Van Treese

3. Saturation (greyscale) - Owen Ferro

4. Strange Dialect - Kevin Flowers

Intermission

5. Looking Up - Blake Van Treese

6. Gray Pedtals - 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 buildup 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.