

Barbara Benary and the Expanding Braid

For two islands so small, so far away, and with so little political clout, Bali and Java pack a wallop of an impact on American music. Ever since Colin McPhee marooned himself there in the 1930s, seduced away from his Western lifestyle and even his music by his island paradise, one composer after another has fallen under the spell of the cyclic structures and pattering momentum of the Balinese and Javanese gamelan, an orchestra of gongs and metallophones. It was noised about some years ago that there were more than a hundred gamelans in the United States, many of them in universities—some devoted to traditional music, many to new works, some run by composers like Jarad Powell, Jody Diamond, and Evan Ziporyn. Composers who study African music pick up its rhythms; those who study Indian music develop a new attitude toward tuning; fans of Japanese music tend toward glissandos. But those who get the Bali bug seem to throw over their Western training altogether and rebuild their music from the ground up.

It was partly true of the great Lou Harrison, the best-known American to write a large output for gamelan. But the composer whose outlook became most pervaded by the structure of gamelan music may be Barbara Benary, co-founder and guiding spirit of New York's Gamelan Son of Lion. A quiet, self-effacing presence on the New York music scene for almost four decades now, Benary has rarely been in the foreground, but behind the scenes she is well connected. A child of Manhattan's conceptualist movement, she was the designated violinist of early minimalism, a pioneer in American gamelan, and an early example of an increasingly frequent type, the ethnomusicologist-turned-composer (Lois Vierk being another example). Chances are you've never heard her music on compact disc before this, but New York's Downtown scene has regarded her highly for a long time.

Born in Bay Shore, New York, in 1946, Benary was composing as early as age four, and took up violin in school. She attended Sarah Lawrence, where the composition department was devoted to twelve-tone music, with the result, she says, that she learned more from her theater studies with Wilford Leach and John Braswell than from her music teachers. (That theater training would later surface in shadow-puppet operas such as *Karna* of 1994 and *Wayang Esther* of 2001.) Visiting Wesleyan on weekends, she became involved with the gamelan there, and received a scholarship to pursue graduate studies. For nine months she studied Karnatic Indian violin in Madras with classical violin master K.S. Venkataramiah and his son V. Thyagarajan, as well as with T. Viswanathan and T. Ranganathan. Here she also met Philip Glass, who was doing his own research into Indian musical practices, and he invited her to play with his ensemble when she returned. The fast-sawing fiddler in those great old Chatham Square recordings of Glass and Jon Gibson before they were famous? That's Benary.

After a year of touring with Glass, Benary got a teaching job at Rutgers in 1973. There, with similarly minimalist-leaning colleagues Daniel Goode and Philip Corner, she started a Javanese gamelan, named for herself—Benary is Hebrew for Son of Lion. She taught traditional Javanese music, and recorded new gamelan music for Folkways records. In June of 1979 she was involved in New Music New York, the festival that put New Music on the map as a genre, and that showed the world that minimalism had created a whole new music culture, more laid back and listenable than the tense modernism of the conservatories.

Nevertheless, academia being the great uncomprehending beast it is, Benary was denied tenure in 1980. To Rutgers's profound loss, she picked up her marbles and took them to New York, where Gamelan Son of Lion, the city's first gamelan for new music, is still in business twenty-six years later. Meanwhile, Benary has lived the life of a freelance composer, involved in theater and dance and in public and

private school teaching. She is also a prolific novelist. Her novels include, among others, *Cathy Riley*, a story of teenage girlhood that draws on her experiences as a rape crisis counselor; *An American Mahabharata*, which transfers the Indian story of warring factions to an abolitionist family during the Civil War; and *Backtracking*, a Vietnam-era mystery set in the Canadian Rockies.

Benary's early music is a curious fusion of two worlds: gamelan, and the heady Downtown New York milieu of minimalism and conceptualism, which by 1971 hadn't entirely separated. Inspired by John Cage, conceptualism was nurtured in the scene around Yoko Ono's loft, where La Monte Young and Richard Maxfield started a rather bizarre concert series in 1960. Characteristically, conceptualist pieces were written in words rather than notes. Some of them became rather notorious, like Young's *Composition 1960 # 5*: "Turn a butterfly (or any number of butterflies) loose in the performance area... the composition may be considered finished when the butterfly flies away." Or Takehisa Kosugi's *Music for a Revolution*: "Scoop out one of your eyes 5 years from now and do the same with the other eye 5 years later." Or Nam June Paik's *Danger Music No. 5*: "Creep into the vagina of a living whale." More performably, Pauline Oliveros urged performers to "make a sound until you no longer want to change it, then change it."

Other instruction-based pieces, however—like Glass's *I + I*, which gave rules for the combination of rhythmic patterns tapped on an amplified table—resulted in process-oriented musical results. Benary's earliest pieces were in this vein, additionally informed by the patterns of gamelan music. A set of *System Pieces for a Droning Group* she collected in 1971 is full of words with a few rhythmic patterns and only a few notes. Often the pitches are left to the performers' discretion, and what is directed are the patterns in which the performers repeat their chosen pitches or melodies. In *Exchanges*, which appeared at New Music New York, a trio of singers or players starts on a sustained drone pitch, and then new pitches are introduced by going around a circle, each player taking over the pitch of the person on his right. The directions for another piece called *Mridanga Yati* run as follows:

The first singer sings one unit, then repeats it.

The second player sings this first unit, continues it by one more unit, then repeats units 1 and 2.

The third player sings units 1 and 2, then adds unit 3. Then he repeats 1, 2, and 3....

While the melody is being built, players can if they wish hum counter-lines which repeat with the phrase, or drone pitches from the melody.

One thing that from the beginning separated Benary from her minimalist colleagues was an interest in improvisation that has run through her entire output, and some of these System pieces required considerable preparation and creativity on the part of the performers. As she has written, ". . . why should I impose my particular notes unless there's some reason why my notes would serve the purpose better than someone else's? Defining the structure is already an act of composition." Elsewhere, she offers a manifesto:

The 'piece' is a child.

It is also a vehicle of communication.

The child is an idea in the parents' mind.

They give it life, try to shape it to their imagined end.

Other things shape it too.

Other people, life's happenings and the growing plan from within.

The good parent knows when the shaping is done.

Lets go.

Has no fear of the diverse possibilities into which the child may grow.

After the System pieces came, between 1974 and 1980, a series of *Braid* pieces for gamelan: *Braid Piece*, *Sleeping Braid*, *Counter-Braid*, *Macramé*, and others. Pretty, slowly changing, steady in momentum, these are more note-specific, based on a diatonic progression of 14 pitches in alternating intervals—F# B A D C# F# E A G C# B E D G (F#). They involve performers playing the bells of the gamelan in interlocking rhythmic patterns, sometimes proceeding through the pitch-braid at their own pace, sometimes with added free melody, canons, and text. They set the pattern for Benary's music of an underlying static or cyclic structure around which other elements are entwined. In fact, she is one of those composers whose music seems generated by a single archetype, the way Oliveros's music stems from the breath, Xenakis's from noise, Lois Vierk's from the glissando. The braid—with its elements ever reappearing, twining around one another, recurring within orderly process—is a good image to keep in mind through all of Benary's music.

This much background brings us up to the pieces on the current recording. In them one will hear Benary's permutational braiding techniques in the background, but, since 1980, so many surprises have developed on the surface! The most recent work, *Aural Shoehorning* of 1997, is quite the strangest. In it, Benary, with gleeful insouciance, breaks one of the cardinal laws of music: Thou shalt not use two tuning systems in the same piece. A commission from Minnesota's Zeitgeist new-music ensemble in connection with the Schubert Club gamelan in St. Paul, this peculiar work combines conventional piano, vibraphone, marimba, clarinets, and percussion with an eight-piece gamelan with all the traditional instruments—sarons, kenongs, gongs, slentem, and the suling flute. The tuning of the gamelan is pretty radically different from our European 12-equal-steps-per-octave, and in fact, no two gamelans are tuned alike. Here, a melody heard first in the gamelan is then heard with the piano and mallet percussion, *at the same time*, brazenly out of tune. This writer is accustomed to some bizarre musical phenomena, but knows of no other piece in which one can savor the same melody in two different tunings. (The improvising keyboardist Elodie Lauten has been known to play in both equal temperament and well temperament at the same time, which, though scintillating, is a much milder effect than that heard here.)

But it works, with a casual and joyous incommensurability that suggests the happy mingling of two cultures, or, in Benary's own words, "a marriage in which neither partner is asked to convert." One of the oddest moments is when the gamelan melody ends and suddenly reappears in the solo piano, harmonized and counterpointed as genteelly as a nineteenth-century English sonata. As the momentum builds, the gamelan players snake among the various gongs with athletic grace, while the woodwind players improvise with increasing ferocity. As intricately braided together as the two ensembles are, their notations in the score are kept separate: notes on staves for the Western musicians, traditional numbers and letters for the gamelan. The title *Aural Shoehorning* was taken from a phrase by a music critic, describing the effect of trying to hear two tunings at once. It sounds like no other music in the world.

Sun on Snow, an earlier work from 1985, follows the *Braid* pieces and is closer to them in spirit. Loosely scored for from five to eight instruments, it is drawn from a melody in rhythmless noteheads that the players are free to ornament as they wish. The text is an anagrammatic poem that can be read in either of two directions, either left to right or top to bottom:

Sun on white snow shine
Burn dark frost to tears

Where roads of earth lead
We go time makes us
Seek the lost path home

The music similarly swings both ways, in five movements of increasing intricacy. After the soprano sings the words, her tune spreads to marimba, concertina, electric guitar, clarinet, and soprano sax. The second movement is a composed score, but its polyphonic lines can be taken up by any instrument, as the players choose. The third movement is similar in technique, but leaves room for improvisation by soloists, and the fourth creates a hocketing effect, with 8th-notes popping back and forth between instruments. Characteristically, the final movement is a calm denouement, its soulful solos played within a major scale while the singer sings again on a single pitch.

The *Barangs I* and *II* of 1975 are the only works here from Benary's early period, one a solo for flute (or other wind instrument) and the other a duet. Barang is one of the *pathets*, or modes, of Indonesian music, whose flavor Benary preserves by emphasizing the same scale degrees as do her models. In scale (purest C major) and melodic contour these evoke the suling flute of gamelan music, though their development has a certain Western buildup to it. The duet distances itself from European counterpoint by falling into passages of unison and almost-unison.

The most rollicking piece comes last. The title of *Downtown Steel* (1993) signals its cultural fusion: "Downtown" referring to lower Manhattan, "Steel" to the bars of the gamelan, though this piece is scored for Western instruments. The work begins with a rapid ostinato in the glockenspiel of a kind that her *Braid* music would have led you to expect. Beneath this the piano enters in parallel fifths in a rhythmic pattern that, as it turns out, will recur throughout the piece at various speeds: 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 2. The melodic pattern of these fifths follows a permutational logic based on an English bell-ringing pattern known as "Grandsire Doubles":

1 2 3 4 5
1 3 2 5 4
3 1 5 4 2
3 5 1 4 2 . . .

and so on—a device that, interestingly, much of Jon Gibson's early music was based on as well.

You've got to imagine this piece played live, as I've seen it. For in front of the percussion and piano sit an ominous quartet of winds: bass clarinet, alto sax, trombone, and tuba. Like the Four Wind Players of the Apocalypse, they blast in on a sudden key change, with a blaring chord, streaked with glissandos, that signals that this is not one of Benary's mild-mannered *Braid* pieces. In fact, another reference in the title was that this piece was inspired by a spacious quality of rock percussion in Steely Dan's song "The Royal Scam." The music braids these tonalities and textures together, leading to a mellower moment with a solo for the alto sax. After a pause, the second section brings the 3 + 2 + 3 + 2 + 2 back as an ostinato rhythm, first in double tempo and then *quadruple* tempo, building up a powerful energy before a graceful final diminuendo.

That such a blockbuster should die away quietly is significant, and of a piece with Benary's modest personality. As wild as her music can become, its ultimate point is never to impress the listener with technical feats or flashy masses of sound. Hers is a spiritual music, and the spirituality resides in the universality of her lines, universal because they are simple, particular to no one culture. Like Harrison,

Virgil Thomson, Glass, and some other counter-establishment Americans, Benary has a faith in the power of music's most basic elements, which she knits into intricate patterns before letting them unravel again. A braid, after all, is a method of taking simple lines and weaving them into something that surpasses the sum of its parts—but always comes back to them. —*Kyle Gann*

Kyle Gann is a composer, new-music critic for The Village Voice since 1986, and music professor at Bard College. His books include The Music of Conlon Nancarrow, American Music in the 20th Century, and Music Downtown: Writings from The Village Voice.

Composer, performer, and ethnomusicologist **Barbara Benary** (violin, gamelan, vibraphone) received a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, where her areas of specialization were the musics of India and Indonesia, which she subsequently taught at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She has performed in the ensembles of Philip Glass, Jon Gibson, Alvin Lucier, Philip Corner, and Daniel Goode. She has received a Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship (1972) and commissions from the National Endowment for the Arts (1982, 1993), Meet the Composer, and the Jerome Foundation.

Benary is a co-founder of Gamelan Son of Lion, a new music collective and repertory ensemble in New York City (1976–). She has composed more than thirty pieces for gamelan ensemble which have been performed by Gamelan Son of Lion and by other groups in the United States and internationally. Her composition work has been in two areas: ensemble chamber music and theater music. Her styles are various but include process and minimalism, and the integration of world music forms, structures, and instruments with traditional Western materials. Her book *System Pieces 1971–1992*, published by Frog Peak Music, provides nineteen improvisational structures for education and/or performance.

She has written theater and dance scores for a number of companies including the New York Shakespeare Festival, La MaMa E.T.C., Lenox Arts Theatre, Odyssey Theatre, Laura Pawel Dance Co., and Bali-Java Dance Theatre. Her theatre piece *Karna: A Shadow Puppet Opera* (1994) combines gamelan and vocal oratorio with Javanese wayang kulit puppetry. *Wayang Esther: A Javanese Purimspiel* (2001) continues her work in the format combining puppet theatre, oratorio, and gamelan-based accompaniment.

Ms. Benary is a member of BMI. Her scores are distributed by Frog Peak Music and the American Gamelan Institute.

Phyllis Clark (soprano) has performed recitals featuring works by composers Robert Dennis, Roger Verdesi, Martha Alter, Louise Talma, Wendy Griffiths, and Music Under Construction. She is a collaborator in Equal Voices, an a cappella sextet performing a wide range of vocal repertoire. A former member of the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble, she premiered many of their commissioned works. She is Artistic Director of Women Singing, a chamber choir, and teaches at St. David's School and the Dalcroze School.

Composer, educator, and sculptor **David Demnitz** (gamelan) has been a composer-member of Gamelan Son of Lion for twenty years. Demnitz studied composition and sculpture at the Mason Gross School of Arts at Rutgers University, where he received his M.F.A. in 1983. His compositions involve minimalism, structured improvisation, and rhythmic materials from Afro-Caribbean styles. He has received a Mary Cary Flagler Charitable Trust grant for production of his CD *Gamelan as a Second Language* (GSOL 002). Demnitz currently works as a music instructor at residential treatment centers in

Westchester County. In this context, insights and procedures discovered while composing for the gamelan are put to use in devising an innovative curriculum and group activities for the students.

Nick Didkovsky (electric guitar, gamelan) is a guitarist, composer, and software programmer. In 1983, he founded the avant-rock septet Doctor Nerve. He presently resides in New York City, where he composes, creates music software, and teaches computer music composition at New York University. He has composed music for Bang on a Can All-Stars, Meridian Arts Ensemble, Fred Frith Guitar Quartet, California EAR Unit, New Century Players, ARTE Quartett, and other ensembles. He is the principal author of the computer music language JMSL. He is director of bioinformatics for the Gensat project at The Rockefeller University, and develops software at a neurobiology lab there.

Jon Gibson (soprano sax) is a composer, multi-wind instrumentalist, and visual artist who has taken part in numerous landmark musical events over the past three and a half decades, performing in the early works of Steve Reich, Terry Riley, LaMonte Young, and Philip Glass— with whom he continues to perform in various configurations—along with a host of other musicians, choreographers, and artists. His solo and ensemble music has been performed in many venues throughout the world. Recent projects and performances include collaborations with Nina Winthrop & Dancers, music for a documentary about the Rubin Museum of Art, a recording on the Tzadik label titled *Criss X Cross*, and a 2006 opera, *Violet Fire*, about the inventor Nikola Tesla.

Daniel Goode (clarinet, gamelan), a composer and clarinetist, was born in New York. His solo, ensemble, and intermedia works have been performed worldwide. He is the founder/director of the Flexible Orchestra, and a co-founder/director of the DownTown Ensemble, formed in 1983. He has been a performer and composer with Gamelan Son of Lion since 1976. His innovative music for solo clarinet includes *Circular Thoughts* (Theodore Presser Co.) and *Clarinet Songs* on the XI label. His theater-music work, *Eight Thrushes, Accordion and Bagpipe*, was performed at the Pfeifen im Walde festival in Berlin, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. He is a 2004 New York Foundation for the Arts fellow.

Patrick Grant (gamelan) is a composer and musician based in New York City who produces concerts and recordings with his production company sTRANGEmUSIC. His music is often based on elements of science (*Genome, BIG BANG*), in conjunction with video (Gary Beeber's *Lonely Ride Coney Island*), avant-garde theater (Robert Wilson and The Living Theatre), for art installations (the Louvre Museum), and for modern dance (Margaret Jenkins Dance Co.). His own ensemble, Patrick Grant Group, is comprised of multiples of electronic keyboards with acoustic instruments, which reflects his love of gamelan. He has made three trips to Bali where he studied and wrote for gamelan.

Lisa Karrer (gamelan) works internationally as a composer, vocalist, director, and a performance and video artist. She produced the CDs *Pick of the Litter* by Music for Homemade Instruments, and Gamelan Son of Lion's *Bending the Gending*; and with co-composer David Simons recorded their chamber opera *The Birth of George* on Harvestworks's Tellus label. Ms. Karrer has created various performance projects in Estonia, including a 2003 tour to the Glasperlenspiel Festival with GSOL. She composed and directed *Woman's Song: The Story of Roro Mendut*, a multi-arts production which premiered at the Kitchen in 2003, in co-production with the World Music Institute. She is currently developing *America the Beautiful*, a sound/video installation.

Jody Kruskal (gamelan) is a composer, performer, instrument builder, and teacher living in Brooklyn, New York. He joined Gamelan Son of Lion in 1989 and sang the title role in Barbara Benary's *Karna* in 1994. He is the musical director, founder, and builder of the Public Works Orchestra, performing

numerous dance commissions including works by Laura Gates (Dance Center of Cambridge) and Elise Long (Spoke the Hub). He composed gamelan-influenced scores for Shakespeare on the Sound company (Rowayton, Connecticut) productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. He also writes fiddle tunes for traditional dancing, and plays Anglo concertina with the contra bands Grand Picnic and Squeeqology.

Joseph Kubera (piano) has been a leading interpreter of contemporary music for the past twenty-five years and appears regularly at festivals in the United States and Europe. Michael Byron, Anthony Coleman, David First, Alvin Lucier, Roscoe Mitchell, and "Blue" Gene Tyranny, among others, have written works for Mr. Kubera. A longtime Cage performer, he recorded the *Music of Changes* and *Piano Concert*, and toured with the Cunningham Dance Company at Cage's invitation.

He is a core member of S.E.M. Ensemble, the DownTown Ensemble, and Roscoe Mitchell's New Chamber Ensemble, and he has performed with a wide range of New York ensembles and orchestras. The Joseph Kubera/Sarah Cahill piano duo has premiered new works by Terry Riley, Ingram Marshall, and Michael Byron. Mr. Kubera has solo recordings on Wergo, Albany, New Albion, New World Records, Lovely Music, O.O. Discs, Mutable Music, Cold Blue, and Opus One.

Laura Liben (gamelan) has worked as a musician with the 9th Street Theatre of New York City, on various Elizabeth Swados productions, and with Shauna Kantor's Vocal Works! Theatre, touring in the United States and Great Britain. Ms. Liben plays Jewish and other forms of music in the New York City area, teaches Middle Eastern percussion at the Lucy Moses School for Music and Dance in Manhattan, and works with children as a music teacher and dance accompanist. She has appeared on several of Giora Feidman's recent recordings.

Percussionist **Chris Nappi** (marimba, drums) has appeared throughout Europe, Scandinavia, and the United States with the S.E.M. Ensemble, Newband, The New Music Consort, Steve Reich and Musicians, Ben E. King, and John Wesley Harding. As a composer he has created music for dance, theatrical productions, and multimedia installations and has recorded for the Columbia, Ear-Rational, Mode, New Tone, Rene Block Editions, Tzadik, and Wergo labels.

Tubist **Marcus Rojas** has performed and recorded with groups in many diverse styles, from classical to jazz to contemporary. Some of these include the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, New York City Opera, the American Symphony, American Ballet Theater, Joffrey Ballet, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the New York Pops, EOS, Radio City Music Hall, Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and Jazz at Lincoln Center with Wynton Marsalis, as well as ensembles led by Gil Evans, George Russell, Jim Hall, Lionel Hampton, Dave Douglas, Wayne Shorter, David Byrne, and P.D.Q. Bach. He has played on more than three hundred recordings and for every major film, television, and record company in the United States.

Bill Ruyle (mallets) has been a percussionist/collaborator for new music, dance, and theater in New York City and abroad for more than twenty-five years. He has played in the ensembles of Peter Zummo, Jon Gibson, Peter Gordon, Bill Obrecht, Scott Johnson, Phillip Johnston, "Blue" Gene Tyranny, The Feetwarmers, The Manhattan Marimba Quartet, Last Forever, Newband, Sequitur, The Locrian Chamber Players, Counter)induction, and The Hudson Valley Philharmonic. He has taught in many educational outreach programs including The Music Advancement Program at Juilliard, Lincoln Center Institute, and LINK-UP at Carnegie Hall. His own compositions have been performed domestically and internationally.

Clarinetist **Steven Silverstein** plays a variety of contemporary, historical, and ethnic woodwinds, and has over the years performed extensively in classical chamber music, early music ensembles, big bands, and concert bands. He has played in many dance and theater productions, including works by Martha Clarke and Richard Peaslee (Music Theatre Group), Lincoln Center Beaumont Theatre, Yoshiko Chuma and Mark Bennett, Ralph Lee, and Joseph Papp and the Public Theatre. He has recorded with Paul Winter and The Western Wind. As an educator, Silverstein has taught at a number of universities. He is also a woodwind designer and holds a patent related to woodwind technology.

David Simons (gamelan) is a composer/performer specializing in percussion, theremin, digital electronics, and world music. He has recorded and toured internationally with his own ensembles, and with Music for Homemade Instruments, Gamelan Son of Lion, and numerous other groups and artists. Simons has composed scores for dance, film, theater, installations, and concert ensembles. He received a 2003 Rockefeller Foundation residency at Bellagio, Italy, to compose music for Newband and its Harry Partch instruments. His 2004 CD *Prismatic Hearing* is available on the Tzadik label.

Peter Thompson (clarinet) was selected as a finalist in the International Clarinet Association's 2004 High School Competition and was a prizewinner at the 2004 University of Maryland at Baltimore County High School Chamber Music Festival. In high school, Peter played in the Rockland Youth Philharmonic and the Bergen Youth Orchestra. Peter is now a sophomore at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Rochester, where he studies music and physics. He has studied with Robert Renino and Steve Silverstein, and currently studies with Kenneth Grant.

Peter Zummo (trombone) is a New York Downtown-based composer, improviser, and performer whose compositions explore influences and methodologies of the minimalist, jazz, world music, and rock styles. Zummo has devised pioneering ensembles and new instrumental techniques for trombone, valve trombone, didjeridoo, euphonium, synthesizer, and voice. He is a core member of New York City's DownTown Ensemble and has been one of the main proponents of process-oriented scores for a great many years.

The **DownTown Ensemble** was formed during the 1983–84 season by its co-directors Daniel Goode and William Hellermann in response to a perceived need for repertoire customarily under-represented in today's new-music world. One of the ensemble's foci is music of open (unspecified) instrumentation ranging from the completely notated to the minimally notated. Special series have focused on emerging composers, commissions (NYSCA), graphic music, and ritual/intermedia, and large ensemble music. The number of performers is flexible; its core group consists most often of Andrew Bolotowsky, flute; Matt Goeke, cello; Daniel Goode, clarinet; William Hellermann, guitar; Guy Klucevsek, accordion; Margaret Lancaster, flute; Mary Jane Leach, voice; James Pugliese and Bill Ruyle, percussion; Joseph Kubera, keyboard; Peter Zummo, trombone.

Gamelan Son of Lion is a new-music repertory ensemble based in downtown New York City specializing in contemporary pieces written for the instruments of the Javanese gamelan, specifically the homemade instruments which were built in village style by Barbara Benary using steel keys, cans for resonators, hubcaps for kempul, etc. The ensemble was begun by a core group of composers: Benary, Daniel Goode, and Philip Corner. Its repertoire centers on new compositions by these and other American composers, both ensemble members and commissioned guests. The repertoire represents a variety of contemporary music styles. The gamelan has also performed experimental works by Indonesian composers, a number of pieces involving gamelan with electronic music, and several theater

works involving opera, wayang kulit, multimedia, and dance.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Metal Notes. Gamelan Son of Lion. Locust 78.

The Complete Gamelan in the New World. Gamelan Son of Lion. Locust 41/42.

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New Gamelan/New York. GSOL 001 (available from Gamelan Son of Lion).

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Gann, Kyle. *American Music in the 20th Century*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997.

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Production assistant: Jeanne Velonis

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BARBARA BENARY (b. 1946)

Downtown Steel

MEMBERS OF DOWNTOWN ENSEMBLE

& GAMELAN SON OF LION

80646-2

Aural Shoehorning (1997) 25:07

1. Plainsong 7:32
2. Northwest 3:30
3. Smudging 5:37
4. Amtrak 5:21

5. Tujuh 3:07

Joseph Kubera, piano; Steven Silverstein, clarinet, bass clarinet; Chris Nappi, vibraphone; Bill Ruyle, marimba; Barbara Benary, David Demnitz, Daniel Goode, Patrick Grant, Lisa Karrer, Jody Kruskal, Laura Liben, David Simons, gamelan

Sun on Snow (1985) 14:23

6. I 4:15

7. II 2:30

8. III 4:28

9. IV 1:55

10. V 1:15

Phyllis Clark, soprano, percussion; Barbara Benary, violin; Daniel Goode, clarinet; Jon Gibson, soprano sax; Jody Kruskal, concertina; Chris Nappi, marimba; Nick Didkovsky, electric guitar

11. *Barang I* (1975) 4:00

Steven Silverstein, clarinet

12. *Barang II* (1975) 5:25

Steven Silverstein, Peter Thompson, clarinets

Downtown Steel (1993) 11:39

13. I 6:46

14. II 4:53

Joseph Kubera, piano; Daniel Goode, clarinet; Jon Gibson, soprano sax; Bill Ruyle, marimba; Barbara Benary, vibraphone; Chris Nappi, drum set; Peter Zummo, trombone; Marcus Rojas, tuba; Nick Didkovsky, percussion

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