

DANIEL LENTZ (b. 1942)

ENDING(S)

Twilight String Orchestra
Nicholas Deyoe, conductor
Fahad Siadat, tenor *

80815-2

1 *Continental Divide* (2003) 23:48

2 *Ending(s)* (2018) * 28:49

TT: 52:39

New World Records, 20 Jay Street, Suite 1001, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638

info@newworldrecords.org www.newworldrecords.org

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Daniel Lentz: Music of Place and Protest

WHILE CERTAIN RECOGNIZABLE FINGERPRINTS ARE FOUND THROUGHOUT the body of Daniel Lentz's work, he has never been content to settle within one particular style or mode of music for long, moving ever forward in an evolutionary continuum, an overriding arc that defines his growth as a composer—beginning with traditional music, diverting into electronic music, moving into performance art pieces for his various touring groups, then sallying into minimalism, followed by work distinguished for its revolutionary use of live multi-track recording in performances in the 1980s and 1990s, and finally evolving into his own brand of modern romanticism.

Daniel Lentz was born in 1942 near Latrobe, Pennsylvania, situated in the southwestern part of that state, at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains. This is an important distinction for a man who grew up in the country, attended a two-room schoolhouse through grade school, went on to tour the world and receive commissions from noted orchestras and ensembles, and have his music recorded by multiple record companies. His early upbringing in a somewhat bucolic setting firmly grounded him in nature, in landscape, and in community, and a number of his compositions reflect this attachment to place: *Point Conception* (1980); *Lascaux* (1983); *Topanga Tango* (1985); *An American In L.A.* (1989); *Pacific Coast Highway* (2008); *Sedona Waltz* (2015); and, on this recording, *Continental Divide* (2009).

In a family of three girls and four boys, he was always a little wild, always a little different, and it wasn't until his father bought him a trumpet that music came alive

for Lentz. He took to the instrument with a passion and became so proficient that in a blind audition for first chair in high school he was selected immediately, until the director realized he was not only a freshman, but the youngest of his class, having been moved ahead one grade. But that did not deter him. He formed a jazz band that toured the state to great acclaim, playing arrangements and his own compositions. His musical fate was sealed at an early age.

At age sixteen, though not Catholic in upbringing, he studied music composition at St. Vincent College, where he discovered and became intrigued by plainchant and liturgical music, both of which would become integral to his evolving musical language, as would the texts of the Mass and Requiem (*Missa Umbrarum* [1973]; *Requiem Songs* [1975]; *wolfMASS* [1984]; *OrgasMass* [1992]). Graduating with a bachelor's degree, Lentz received his MFA at Ohio University, where he met Karlheinz Stockhausen, ran sound for one of his concerts, and wrote his master's thesis on Stockhausen's music. (The two became friends, and Stockhausen would later write a performance piece for one of Lentz's groups.) Then Lentz attended Brandeis, where he studied with Arthur Berger, Alvin Lucier, and Harold Shapero. In the summer of 1966 he was a composition fellow at Tanglewood, where he studied with Roger Sessions and George Rochberg, and became friends with Gunther Schuller, who was director of Tanglewood that year. (Lentz's piece, *Lovesong for Medeighnia*, was performed by the Tanglewood Chamber Orchestra, with soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson and electric harpsichordist Yuji Takahashi, conducted by Pierre Salzmann.)

These early experiences with world-class composers, performers, and conductors broadened and deepened Lentz's musical "toolbox" and propelled him to a Fulbright Fellowship at the Swedish Radio's Electronic Music Studio in Stockholm. From

Sweden, Lentz went to the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he taught composition and formed his first performing group, the California Time Machine. His penchant for testing the boundaries of performance art led him to create the notorious (at the time, 1968) concert piece, *Love and Conception*, in which a tuxedo-clad pianist played a Chopin-like piece composed by Lentz while a young lady in an evening gown turned pages. As the piece progressed, the pianist's hands left the keyboard—while the piece's piano part continued to play via a radio broadcast—and the two began to dance; as the piece reached its climax the two performers undressed and climbed into the piano for their tryst. The struggle between what is proper and acceptable and what isn't—what is taboo and what is music and art—is a leitmotif that runs throughout Lentz's career. *Ending(s)* on this recording is a prime example: Who else but Lentz would think to combine two Japanese haiku with a section of the Requiem Mass and a description of how an atom bomb explodes?

Perhaps the most important aspect of Lentz's compositions is that they immediately connect to the listener. This is because he started out as a performer, not as an academic, and from his first jazz band through years of touring his music with multiple groups, he never lost sight of whom he was writing for—the listener. Performers know the feeling of connecting to an audience in real time, and it's a heady feeling to have that immediate feedback and positive reinforcement. This simple intention permeates his music. Never pandering or soft-peddling his message, never compromising his artistic integrity, Lentz has gone *straight for the listener* all his life, and his music connects in ways that are simultaneously intellectual and emotional.

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Continental Divide, for string orchestra, was composed in 2003. One's first impression is that it is "American" music at its finest, and if some passages or connecting themes seem vaguely reminiscent of Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* or Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, that's because those perennials are so entrenched in our ears as American musical landscapes. A more apt comparison would be the episodic music of Ferde Grofé—music of sweep and grandeur, as in *The Grand Canyon Suite*, and, perhaps more appropriately, *The Mississippi Suite*—because *Continental Divide* is traveling music. And as the piece progresses the listener is swept along across this massive line of demarcation—a line dividing perhaps more than just the west from the east, or one way of life from another. Lentz wrote the music as a testament to the many road trips he took across the American landscape, and it captures stark granite formations, the lushness of desolation, the beauty of sky and rock, and the exhilaration of giddy peaks traversed. During those trips, radio stations were few and far between, but one of them played bluegrass, which harkened back to his childhood and provided inspiration for the "fiddling" sections of the piece.

In contrast to a number of the composer's works that have relied on his "cascading echo" concept to create complex, evolving pieces from many small recurring bits of music—as in *Song(s) of the Sirens* (1975), *Can't See the Forest . . . Music* (1971), or *In the Sea of Ionia* (2008)—*Continental Divide* can be considered through-composed, continuously flowing without much direct repetition; however, certain motifs in this piece do appear briefly, only to be resurrected later.

The piece begins with an Adagio, featuring open fifths and octaves, slowly rising and shifting—shimmering with overtones, as if emulating a pipe organ—leading to the first motif: a simple four-note, five-bar figure in the violins, counterpointed by a two-note "rocking" motif in the violas. (Both of these motifs will return at a later time.)

A new section then begins with a motif from the double basses, a rising figure that quickly divides and invites the cellos, and then the rest of the strings, to join in. With the entrance of the rest of the orchestra's instruments, the musical cross-country journey is now underway in earnest, the musical figures continually rising and shifting as the *Continental Divide* landscape changes.

A Moderato section begins with a pizzicato in the double basses, which the cellos and violas answer with a syncopated rhythm, followed by the other strings chiming in with a triplet figure that abruptly goes from triplets to sixteenth-notes—and this is where the fiddling starts. (Lentz says it was a challenge finding a way to write “fiddling” that would sound something like the real thing.) The fiddling figure does not have long to bask in its own glory, however, as the bass pizzicato line returns, along with an irresistible sense of acceleration. A nod to Minimalism abides in this section.

A somber Lento follows the climax of the fiddling section. From this emerges a plaintive solo viola, strikingly beautiful in its lower register. After a brief respite, the viola returns to continue its melancholy song over the slowly pulsating motion of the rest of the orchestra, finally entering its upper register to mirror its own song. As the viola recedes into the ensemble's texture, the pulsing continues, giving way to a waltz-like rhythm. The sensation of a waltz is misleading, for the time signatures vary significantly, from 6/2 to 5/2 to 4/2 to 6/2, as a sense of urgency increases (via a crescendo and slight accelerando) and then, at this lively section's peak, dynamically drops back to a whisper.

An Espressivo section now brings back the melancholy of the viola solo, moving to a cadence that could be an ending in itself, but is only the threshold of a new section that brings back the fiddling motif—modified this time—rich with shimmering harmonies and a violin melody that is redolent of the earlier viola solos. The tempo

increases as the double basses join the fray and then, during a long crescendo, the piece reaches its true climax, only to dissipate, evaporate, and be supplanted by a ghost, a memory of music in rarefied air.

Ending(s) (for double string quintet) is protest music at its best, music that champions life over those things that try to rip apart the fabric of the country, the society, the self. This type of music has a rich representation in the work of Lentz. His *King Speech* (1971) featured the “I Have a Dream” speech of Martin Luther King in a new and dramatic way. One of Lentz's most recognized pieces, *The Crack in the Bell* (1986), which was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (and recorded on the Angel record label), laments that democracy is in jeopardy. But the piece most near to *Ending(s)* in spirit, perhaps, is a performance piece Lentz wrote for his first group tour in 1968—*Rice, Wax and Narrative*. In this performance/concept piece, the audience was invited to have hydrogen peroxide poured into their ear canals, the resulting interaction of peroxide and earwax approximating the bubbling sound of flesh being burned away by napalm; during this “audience participation,” a performer on stage would read the long list of names of those Americans who were killed in the Vietnam War. It was a bold experiment, and while *Ending(s)* may not be so immediately visceral, it is no less effective in reminding the listener of the destruction of war.

Where *Continental Divide*'s musical figures always tend to rise, the musical figures of *Ending(s)* almost invariably descend (this observation comes from the composer himself). Completed in 2018, *Ending(s)*, like *Continental Divide*, continuously evolves toward a surprising ending. It begins with an Adagio, its ten strings playing sustained chords, creating a prelude for all that is to come. The mood is one of resignation, yet with a tender motif in the cellos, imparting a sense of solace. In this

section, snippets of melody—thematic elements that will emerge later in the tenor’s melodies—are seamlessly woven into the tapestry of sound. The music then gives way suddenly to a dramatic tremolo in the lower strings, over which glorious chords burst in in an attempt to dispel the tension building below.

A call-and-answer moment of simple descending thirds leads the way into a Largo section, where a simple, lilting melody is introduced by the violins and repeated an octave down by the violas. This resolves into a short chordal section that seems to act as a benediction, followed by a slightly longer section of canonically developing descending lines that prepare the way for the tenor’s first entrance.

The first sung text is by Yasuhiko Shigemoto (b. 1930). He was a schoolboy when the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. Half of his schoolmates died. He returned to the area five days after the bomb had fallen, and had to step over dead bodies as he tried to find his old friends. He began writing poetry later in life, at age 55, finally able to process the tragedy and transmute it into poetry. For this he chose the classical Japanese form of haiku.

A-bomb blast center—
thousands of people to see
the cherry blossoms in full bloom.

—Yasuhiko Shigemoto, from *My Haiku of Hiroshima*
(Used by permission of the author.)

The second haiku follows immediately. This classic poem is timeless in its sentiment. Five hundred years later it still resonates.

Both the victor
and the vanquished are
but drops of dew,
but bolts of lightning—
thus should we view the world.

—Ôuchi Yoshitaka (1507–1551) (Published in *Japanese Death Poems*,
ed., Yoel Hoffmann. Tuttle Publishing. Used by permission.)

The string music between these two haiku and the next sung section is all trills and tremolos that rise up to a chord of harmonics. While softer and more melodious than the earlier tremolo section, its placement here feels much more ominous, before it melts away into the third vocal section—a setting of the Latin Requiem text, edited by the composer..

In Paradisum deducant te Angeli
In tuo adventu suscipiant martyres,
et perducant te . . .
Chorus anglorum te suscipiat et . . .
aeternam habebis requiem.

[Translation: May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs receive you. . . .
May choirs of angels receive you . . . may you have eternal rest.]

The fourth and final text is from M.I.T. physicist, Steve Behrends, Ph.D., who “translated” the science of an atomic explosion into prose at the request of the com-

poser. From the outset, the music has entered its most fierce phase: “Uranium atom explodes,” is a virtual scream at the destructive power that the element contains, a plea for mercy, an admonition. The music here is straightforward and forceful as befits the subject, but this does not last. As the text moves into the actual heart of the matter, “Thus it begins . . .”, a lovely swaying motion from earlier in the piece returns in the strings, and, but for the starkness of the text, one might be listening to a plaintive love song.

Uranium atom explodes
When struck by a neutron particle.
Thus it begins.
Some atom fragments are neutrons.
These strike nearby uranium atoms,
Releasing evermore neutrons.
One becomes two becomes four (becomes)
The birth-heat of the bomb.

The tenor unnervingly caresses the words “one becomes two (becomes) four . . .” and the piece ends on an appropriately ambiguous chord—for is this truly the Ending or the beginning of something else we have yet to imagine? The question remains enigmatically unanswered, in typical Lentzian fashion.

—J. M. Alexander

J. M. Alexander is the Executive Administrator of the Daniel Lentz Archive and is writing an authorized biography of the composer.

Daniel Lentz (b. 1942, Latrobe, PA) began studying music at age six. After graduating from St. Vincent College (B.A., 1962), he received a fellowship to Ohio University (M.F.A., 1965). He entered Brandeis University on a full scholarship in 1965 and was a composition fellow at Tanglewood in 1966. In 1967 Lentz was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to work at Swedish Radio’s Electronic Music Studio, Stockholm. In 1968 he accepted a visiting lectureship at UC Santa Barbara, teaching music theory, composition, and electronic music. He won First Prize in the Gaudeamus International Composers Award competition in 1972.

In Santa Barbara, in 1970, Lentz founded the California Time Machine, a “conceptual music” ensemble that toured the U.S. and Europe. In 1973 he founded the San Andreas Fault, an ensemble of voices, keyboards, and real-time electronics that toured the U.S. and Europe and recorded for radio companies in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and France. In Los Angeles, in 1982, he founded the Daniel Lentz Group, which presented his music on tours of the U.S., Europe, and Asia in the ’80s and ’90s and was featured on shows for BBC-TV, PBS, NOS-TV/Netherlands, NHK-TV/Japan, and Czech Television.

Lentz has received numerous awards, grants, and commissions, including six National Endowment for the Arts grants, three Lila Wallace/Readers Digest Fund grants, a California Arts Council grant, two Arizona Commission on the Arts grants, a DAAD Artists-in-Berlin grant, an Opus Archives and Research Center composition grant, and a Rockefeller Foundation grant, with a residency at the Rockefeller Bellagio Center (Italy). Among those who have commissioned him are the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Interlink Festival (Japan), the Present Music Ensemble, the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, West German Radio (WDR), the

San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble, and the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio, as well as many individuals (such as Betty Freeman) and solo performers. His music has been released by Cold Blue Music, New Albion, Angel, All Saints, ABC Classics, Materiali Sonori, and other labels. www.daniellentzmusic.com

Nicholas Deyoe is a Los Angeles-based composer, conductor, and guitarist, and the co-founder and Artistic Director of the wasteLAnd concert series. As a conductor, Deyoe specializes in contemporary music and has given many world and U.S. premieres. He holds a Ph.D. in composition from UC San Diego, where he studied with Roger Reynolds. He has studied conducting with Russell Guyver, Harvey Sollberger, Rand Steiger, Steven Schick, and Lucas Vis. Deyoe is currently on faculty at California Institute of the Arts, where he conducts The Ensemble, teaches composition and conducting, and is the chair of the instrumental arts specialization. www.nicholasdeyoe.com

Fahad Siadat is a vocalist/performer, composer, and conductor. He maintains a robust schedule of solo and ensemble performing and is artistic director of the vocal ensemble HEX and co-artistic director of the interdisciplinary music/dance ensemble the Resonance Collective. He has performed with such groups as The Industry opera company, C3LA: The Contemporary Choral Collective of Los Angeles, and C4: The Choral Composer/Conductor Collective, in New York. He has presented workshops and lectures at universities and conferences throughout the U.S. and in Europe and has written articles on choral music for NewMusicBox. Siadat is founder of See-A-Dot Music Publishing, a company devoted to new choral works and emerging composers. As a prolific composer, his music has been commissioned and performed by theater, dance, and music ensembles in the U.S., Europe, and China. www.fahadsiadat.com

The **Twilight String Orchestra** is a recording ensemble made up of some of Los Angeles's finest new-music and commercial studio musicians. Its freelance personnel are subject to change from session to session. *Continental Divide* employed 28 players, and *Ending(s)* employed ten. (Some orchestra members played on both pieces, some played on only one piece.)

Twilight String Orchestra

Violins: Peter Kent (concertmaster), Sai-Ly Acosta, Becky Bunnell, Kevin Connolly, Lisa Dondlinger, Clayton Haslop, Sharon Jackson, Marina Manukian, Andrew McIntosh, Carolyn Osborn, Sara Parkins, Kathleen Robertson, Mark Robertson, Julie Rogers, Andrew Tholl, Sarah Thornblade, John Wittenberg
Violas: Andrew Duckles (soloist on *Continental Divide*), Briana Bandy, Leah Katz, Matt Nabours, Andrew Picken, Linnea Powell, Karie Prescott, Carolyn Riley, Rodney Wirtz, Adriana Zoppo
Cellos: John Acosta, Alisha Bauer, Giovanna Clayton, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Paula Fehrenbach, Vahe Hayrikyan, Aniela Perry, Derek Stein
Basses: Jeff Bandy, James Bergman, Scott Worthington

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

After Images. Cold Blue Music Vinyl EP E4.

Apologetica. New Albion NA 097 CD.

The Crack in the Bell. EMI/Angel CDC 49180.

In the Sea of Ionia. Cold Blue Music CB0042.

Los Tigres de Marte. Cold Blue Music CB0016.

Missa Umbrarum. New Albion NA 006 CD.
On the Leopard Altar. Cold Blue Music CB0022.
Point Conception. Cold Blue Music CB0028.
River of 1,000 Streams. Cold Blue Music CB0050.
Voices. Aoede Records AR 101.
wolfMASS. Aoede Records AR 103.

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Francis Goelet (1926–1998), In Memoriam

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