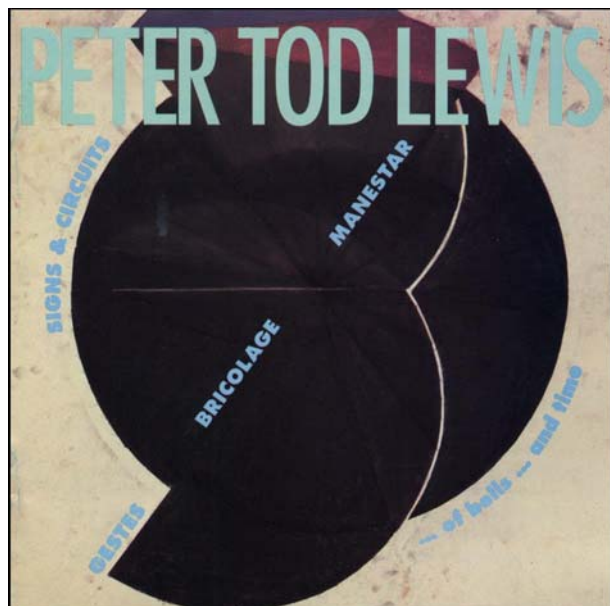


Peter Tod Lewis



1. *Signs and Circuits*: String Quartet No.2 (1969) .. (17:14)
Columbia String Quartet; (Benjamin Hudson & Carol Zeavin, violins; Janet Lyman Hill, viola; André Emelianoff, cello); Tape realized by Peter Tod Lewis
2. *Bricolage*: for Solo Percussion and Tape (1979) † (14:49)
Steven Schick, percussion; Tape realized by Peter Tod Lewis
3. *Manestar*: for Tape and Seven Players (1970) (23:47)
Members of the Center for New Music Ensemble (Jane Walker, flute/piccolo; John R. Melton, trombone; Marsha Johnson, piano; Claire Hillard, violin; Connie Lorber, violin; James Reck, cello; Michael Geary, percussion) William Hibbard, conductor
Tape realized by Peter Tod Lewis
4. *Gestes* (1973) (9:39)
Tape realized by Peter Tod Lewis
5. *...of bells...and time*: a dialogue for violin and piano (1967) (7:24)
John Ferrell, violin; James Avery, piano

Total playing time: 73:18

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Notes

In recalling Peter Tod Lewis, as one of his former students, I feel as though I am taking a very deep breath. His works are open-ended and expansive, as was his teaching. I remember the excitement I felt as he turned to the ancient Moog synthesizer and began to demonstrate a patch he had just discussed. I remember him once mugging while pretending to file his fingertips like a safecracker, and the loving manner in which he touched the instrument. As he began to refine and shape a sound, he drifted away, listening carefully and marveling at where his experiments took us. The point of the lesson was the method, the necessity of diving in and getting your hands dirty, and the necessity of hearing the intricate details of the sound you create.

Peter Tod Lewis (1932-1982) spent his formative years both on the east coast and in California. His principal teachers included Lukas Foss, Arthur Berger, Irving Fine, Wolfgang Fortner, and Roberto Gerhard.

Lewis served as director of the Electronic Music Studios at the University of Iowa from 1969 until his death in 1982. Earlier in his career he received the Wechsler Commission at Tanglewood and fellowships at the Huntington Hartford Foundation and at the MacDowell Colony for artists and composers. Before coming to the University of Iowa, he lived abroad, chiefly in Mallorca. In 1975 he received a faculty research grant enabling him to serve as visiting composer at the Instituut voor Sonologie in Utrecht and the Groupe de Musique Expérimentale in Bourges.

As Peter became engrossed in a composition, the entire studio became his personal instrument. Through several days and nights he would refine the instrument until it began to take on

its own momentum. He sought an instrument which would continually unfold new materials on its own, responding only in a limited manner to the control of the composer. Recording constantly, he would generate a vast amount of material; then he would edit in order to create the sudden, seemingly non-rational changes which he sought in his music.

Nowhere is this working system more evident than in his set of three compositions known as *Gestes*. Concerning *Gestes* (1973), Peter writes:

The 'source gestures' for this piece were generated by a single set of voltages, which controlled characteristics of the electronic signal, and which were in turn controlled by other voltages. (The composer in the studio listens to the output—the sounds, the gestures themselves—as he programs these electronic components.) Further composition occurred during *mixage*, when two or more tapes were mixed; and also during editing, when materials extraneous to the emerging structure were cut out, or when relevant materials were rearranged.

Another aspect of the expansive nature of Peter Tod Lewis's music is the juxtaposition of different musics. About *Manestar* (1970) he writes:

The original idea for this work came from a discarded piano concerto, remnants of which can be heard from time to time. Its collage-like structure is in the same family as *Signs and Circuits*: String Quartet No. 2 (1969). In both works, there is an almost linear stylistic diversity throughout, my intention being to keep the listener alert in this way, by providing him with a musical odyssey, a sound adventure, now exciting, surprising, confusing,

now suave, intense, tender, and at the same time to pull it all together somehow, even in retrospect.

In his notes for *Signs and Circuits* Peter provides us with a list of “Reflections/assumptions/theories/aims” on this work and others:

—All the sonic possibilities of the ensemble are ‘fair game’;

—any sound may follow or accompany any other, though not *anyhow*: the composer discovers *just* how particular sounds work together (antecedents—consequents, counterpoint, sonic fields);

—The composition proceeds, as usual, as an exercise of intuition and intellect, striving for both maximum diversity—which is to say, contrast

—and, through the *same* process (right hemisphere informing the left the corpus callosum), essential unity: *the ancient dream of composing a coherent work without repetition or internal reference*

—the form of the work is its compositional, not to forget its performance, eventuality; that the work be allowed to unfold, to grow, to surprise—me—and you. there is great joy in this.

—the contrasts within the work may be extreme, even stylistically so.

In the same way that his tape compositions grew directly out of the synthesizer, Lewis’s works for acoustic instruments were drawn directly from the musicians he admired. He recalls: “During the final pencil-manuscript stage of the composition, I began a series of consultations with Steven Schick for whom *Bricolage* was written.... His creative input regarding aspects of notation, expression, and all-important logistic details (the precise positioning of the large battery of instruments) which made performance possible at all, proved invaluable, making the composition of *Bricolage* uniquely rewarding for me.”

It seems certain that he used the same intuitive approach to organizing his compositional materials. In regard to the quizzical march which appears in the latter part of *Bricolage*, Lewis states:

This march was composed in Mexico, its rather obsessive tune springing to mind entire one afternoon in 1974 on the dirt road between Oaxaca and the small village of Viguerras, where we lived at the time. I don’t remember

the particular day in 1979, that moment of discovery, when the march, which had until then been considered inappropriate and even downright wrong for *Bricolage*, suddenly became appropriate and right, nor what aesthetic shifts in perception brought this about, but here we are dealing with the mysterious pleasures of music composition.

Bricolage received a John F. Kennedy Center Friedheim Award in 1981.

An earlier visit to Mexico had provided “extra-musical” sources for another acoustic work, the last on this disc, ... *of bells...and time*: a Dialogue for Violin & Piano (1967). Lewis writes:

In the Summer of 1967, we rented a house in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, a city of bells. Ringing out from every church in the city at regular and irregular intervals during the day, the bells are only more or less coordinated, thus constantly varied in rhythm and synchronization, and capable of merely tolling the hour, calling insistently to worship, or dinning in wild celebration. The bells are the city’s most prominent soundmark; together, they produce a highly complex *klang*, the air resonates as with one vast bell within which the inhabitants of the city reside. Doubtless, most people become inured to the sound, but this composer found it irresistible.

In our house, I discovered one day a cache of Brahms piano music, which I took great pleasure in reading from time to time on the excellent Steinway upright.

The present work is a rather free dialogue between violin and piano in which the two “extra-musical” sources above played a part, generating repeated notes and figures, for example, and occasional rhapsodic outbursts. The form of the work, its temporal structure, is likewise rather free, yet paradoxically, no less rigorous in conception.

Peter Tod Lewis’s life was cut tragically short when he died of cancer in 1982. This disc collaboration of Peter’s family, former students, colleagues and friends is intended as both a loving tribute and memorial to him and a document of his creative and influential life and work.

—Michael Farley

Production Notes

Signs and Circuits: Recorded by Jerry Bruck at the Church of the Holy Trinity, NYC on June 5, 1978. Tape realized in 1969 by the composer at the Electronic Music Lab of Southern Illinois Univ.

Bricolage: Recorded at the Univ. of Iowa in 1980. Engineer by Lowell Cross. Tape realized by the composer at Univ. of Iowa Electronic Music Studios, 1980.

Manestar: Recorded at the Univ. of Iowa Center for New Music in November, 1982. Engineered by Lowell Cross. Tape realized in 1970 by the composer at the Univ. of Iowa Electronic Music Studios.

Gestes: Tape realized in 1973 by the composer at the Univ. of Iowa Electronic Music Studios.

...of bells...and time: Recorded at Lee Fur Studio Tucson, Ariz. in 1982.

Engineered by Lee Fur.

All works published by ACA (BMI).

Bricolage was digitally re-mastered by Lowell Cross at the School of Music Recording Studios, University of Iowa. All others were digitally re-mastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Charles Harbutt, engineer at Sony Classical Productions, Inc., NYC using the DCS 900 20-bit a/d converter.

Special thanks to: Mrs. Herminia P. Lewis, Miles Green, James Avery, Hans Breder, Rosalie Calabrese, Michael and Barbara Phillips-Farley, John Ferrell, Douglas Hungerford, Robert Paredes, Steven Schick, Paul Zimmer & Lowell Cross.

This compact disc was made possible through the generous support of:

Mrs. Herminia P. Lewis

Donald & Mary Lewis

Mr. Geoffrey Lewis

Richard & Nancy Peck

Lyman & Mary Grover

Additional support was provided by donors to the

Peter T. Lewis Fund

Of the University Of Iowa:

Valborg Anderson, Maria Luisa Bastos, Barbara Blum, Willard & Susan Boyd, Megan P. Brill, J. Stuart Campbell, Judy Canahuati, Mr. & Mrs. F. Kenyon Clarke, Frederick Crane, Lowell M. Cross, Gail Godwin, Antonia Hamilton, Charles E. Hawtrej, Michael J. Kowalski, Mary Lee Leggett, Edwin London, Rebecca MacLeod, Cindy McTee, Judith S. Reuter, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Rosenbaum, Virginia B. Spicer, Stephen L. Syverud, Louise J. Talma, Jane McCune & Robert S. Wachal, Sarah (Sally) Weston.