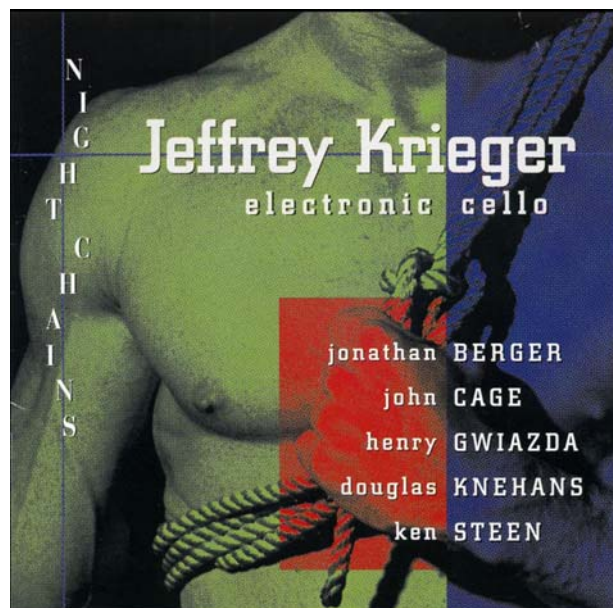


NWCR680

# Jeffrey Krieger

Electronic cello



1. Jonathan Berger  
*The Lead Plates of the Rom Press* (1990) ..... (11:59)  
For Electronic cello and computer; (The cello performance is followed in real time by a Roland VP70 pitch-to-midi-converter which triggers the digital sample from an Akai S1000 sampler and a

Digidesign Sound Accelerator card, and is further processed by a Lexicon reverberator.)

2. Henry Gwiazda  
*themythofAcceptAnce* (1991) ..... (10:08)  
For Electronic cello, Digitech IPS 33B Harmonizer, and sound effects
3. Ken Steen  
*Shadows and Light* (1989)..... (10:05)  
For Electronic cello, Alesis Quadraverb, and MIDI pedals
4. Douglas Knehans  
*night chains* (1991) ..... (16:12)  
For Electronic cello, Alesis Quadraverb, and Boss Turbo Distortion pedal
5. John Cage  
*Ryoanji* (1983-85) ..... (19:40)  
For Electronic cello, voice, and percussion  
(For this performance, four electronic cello parts are modulated by an Alesis Quadraverb in real time, and four voice parts are modulated by Sound Design.); Jeffrey Krieger, Electronic cello

Total playing time: 68:22

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## Notes

*The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, published in 1984, describes the evolution of the violoncello from its early sixteenth-century roots as a collection of the lower-range members of the viol family until the late eighteenth-century when “the instrument was essentially complete.” The works on this recital make that dictionary entry already seem historically quaint.

It is possible, even, to view the history of music as an ever-changing approach to instruments. As for our own technologically obsessed century—which has been devoted to expanding our notion of what music is to the point where it can incorporate a global range of sounds and a global range of formal approaches to using those sounds—we’ve never stopped for a second developing new techniques for playing instruments or changing the technology of the instruments themselves. But the most astonishing change has been to electrify music. Today most of the world hears most of its music through loudspeakers.

But while the electrifying of music has been progressing throughout much of the century, so rapid has the latest technology been developing that we are only now just beginning to explore its full potentials. The electronic cello for which the first four works on this disc were written (John Cage’s *Ryoanji* is an adaptation of music for acoustic instruments) was designed by Tucker Barrett of Vermont and is an instrument unlike any that was possible even at the time

the *New Grove* entry was written. Through interactions with the latest computers, the sonic character of the instrument can be altered during performance in ways limited only by the collaborators’ imaginations.

The electronic cello is still, of course, a cello. It looks like a cello, it is played like a cello, it sounds (when the sound is unprocessed or little processed) like a cello. But it also sounds like a lot of other things as well. And the implications of this are something that we are far from understanding as yet. Indeed, the four technologically astute composers below who have written music for Jeffrey Krieger and his electronic cello seem to readily sense a danger in its destructive potential while at the same time embracing its wondrous sonic potential. That the cello, the most soulful and elegant of all instruments, is no longer pure cannot, for them, be separated from the issues of lost innocence in modern life.

In *The Lead Plates of the Rom Press*, **Jonathan Berger** offers a haunting use of technology for a kind of historical recollection. “The Rom Press was a publishing house in Poland known for its editions of Yiddish poetry and Talmudic tracts,” writes the composer, who is the director of the Yale Center for Studies in Music Technology. “During the Nazi occupation, members of the resistance attempted to melt down the plates of these great literary works and religious tracts in order to produce ammunition.” Almost as if a parable for the insanity of our times, Berger evokes that episode

through a vivid musical drama in which the cello at its most rhapsodic (the instrument of emotional outpouring, from the eighteenth-century laments by Marin Marais to the outpourings of Bloch's *Schelomo*) is confronted with computer sounds rooted in a digitally recorded guiro scrape. The work uses software written by the composer in Max, a graphical object-oriented programming environment that runs on a Macintosh computer.

**Henry Gwiazda's** *themythofAcceptAnce*, written in 1991, is even more theatrically explicit in its use of technological allegory. Gwiazda works extensively with live electronic music and regularly tours the U.S. as a solo composer/performer. Here he is reacting to the way in which a mindless virtuosity that can occur in musical performance, Classical or popular, reduces art to something more in the nature of an athletic event. Through the transforming of familiar sampled sounds, which, Gwiazda notes, "posses a certain mythology when they are combined and juxtaposed in surprising ways," the piece is intended to "reflect the nature of why we work and struggle and the myth of the acceptance we hope to achieve."

For Ken Steen's *Shadows and Light* there can be no acceptance. Commissioned by the AIDS Ministries Program of Connecticut and dedicated in memory of choreographer Rob Kowalski, the score originally served as a solo musical interlude in a collaborative multimedia response to the AIDS epidemic that included dance, storytelling, and additional music by other composers. *Shadows and Light* is muted elegiac music in which medieval notational systems are consulted to derive melodic material from the letters A-I-D-S. "Given the nature of the commission," the composer writes, "interpretation of materials from the Middle Ages also refers to the various plagues which took so many lives at that time." Consequently, Steen, a freelance composer and teacher of composition, theory, and music technology at the Hartt School, uses electronic processes primarily for subtle ambient enhancement, creating the illusion of the expansion and contraction of acoustic space. He doesn't so much explore the cello's timbre as he does our own historical relationship to it.

**Douglas Knehans' night chains**, written in 1991, returns to a dramatic use of technology, but not as representative of an external force. Instead, he conveys the altered state of consciousness between the conflicted worlds of dreams and action, be they "good dreams" or "night terrors." Knehans has approached the medium of the electronic cello in a quite traditional way, drawing on the resources of the instrument itself and traditional performance techniques. Through collaboration with Krieger, such practices underwent extreme transformation within the technological performance environment. Formally, the work itself is constructed as a series of "morphs" or "jump-cuts" not only on a musical and sonic level, but on a psycho-emotional level as well. Knehans spent eighteen years in Australia, prior to returning to the U.S. for graduate study at Yale and is currently the director of the SCREAM (Southern Center for Research into Electro-

Acoustic Music) studio at the University of Alabama. He reminds us that technology can be an expressive, intellectual extension of a long instrumental and compositional tradition. In *night chains*, he exploits technology as an agent of development and distortion in order to create an atmosphere of highly charged expressiveness.

**John Cage**—who wrote a series of *Ryoanji* pieces between 1983 and 1985 as solos for oboe, flute, contrabass, voice, and trombone, with percussion or orchestral obbligato—has different concerns from the narrative or psychological ones of the young composers above. For Cage there was little ambivalence about the benefits of employing technology to expand musical horizons, and his was a wide-awake music (although he had written an early Satiesque piano piece called *Dream*) meant to draw attention to the excellence of the world as it is. In *Ryoanji*, named after a Zen temple in Kyoto and inspired by its famous rock garden, Cage created what he called a "garden" of sounds. The solo part was made by stone tracings, which the player interprets as a music of glissandi, with the lines sometimes overlapping requiring prerecorded tapes and quadrasonic loudspeakers. The percussion part, representing the raked sand around the stones, is comprised of unspecified sounds played in unison in chance-determined patterns that the mind will not readily analyze.

In this rendition of *Ryoanji*, perhaps the first for electronic cello, Krieger employs four electronic cello parts, four voice parts, and one percussion obbligato all played, the cellist says, "As sounds in nature rather than sounds in music, each having its own sound system." And since for Cage the sounds in nature were the sounds in music, this quietly eerie work becomes a predecessor of the other works in this collection in the devising of a ways for an instrument to reach beyond itself and center into both our environment and our psyche.

—Mark Swed

Award-winning performer **Jeffrey Krieger** is a leader in the new generation of solo recitalists who incorporate technology into performance: the computer and video as well as an electronic cello built by Vermont Craftsman Tucker Barrett. Mr. Krieger was a recent recipient of a solo recitalist fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts which allowed extensive touring in the U.S. Mr. Krieger has performed in locations ranging from elementary and preparatory schools, to universities, music festivals, alternative performance spaces, and museums. He has premiered over forty works for the electronic cello with funding from the Canada Council, Minnesota Composers Forum, the Jerome Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation, Massachusetts Cultural Council, the New England Foundation for the Arts, and the Fromm Foundation, among others.

Mr. Krieger has a bachelor of music degree from the Hartt School of Music and a master of music from the Yale School of Music.

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## Production Notes

Produced by Jeffrey Krieger  
Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

*themythofAcceptAnce*, *Shadows and Light*, *night chains*, and *Ryoanji* were recorded at Sound Situation, Glastonbury, Connecticut by David Budries, Engineer. *The Lead Plates of the Rom Press* was recorded live in concert at Yale University School of Music, Eugene Kimball, Engineer.

*The Lead Plates of the Rom Press* published by MAOR Music Publications (ASCAP).

*themythofAcceptAnce* published by the composer (ASCAP).

*Shadows and Light* published by the composer (BMI).

*night chains* published by Armadillo Edition (BMI).

*Ryoanji* published by C.F. Peters Corporation (ASCAP).

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