

***Symphonies in Slanted Time* (2005)**

Duration: about 14 minutes

Instrumentation: 2222 4221 2perc timp piano harp Strings

Previous performances: Indianapolis Symphony, the Esprit Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra

Program notes: Slanted time is how I describe my recent music that is always speeding up or always slowing down. Rather than write music for a steady metronome, I wondered if it were possible to make the change in tempo the normal state of the music. The indications *accel* (speed up!) and *rall* (slow down!) are therefore written over almost every line of the piece.

The idea of working with acceleration developed during the writing of a chamber opera called *Airline Icarus*, which takes place aboard a commercial airplane. I was looking for music to match one of the main themes of the piece: when things are speeding up and getting out of control, the passengers are oblivious. Acceleration is a matter-of-course, calming even. Though an animated piece, *Symphonies in Slanted Time* has similar goals, and dramatic, constant changes in speed form its basic canvass.

The piece is also about using rejuvenation to create constantly changing textures. I've found that when the speed of the music is always changing, the material must continuously renew itself to avoid becoming too fast or too slow. While accelerating for example, one gesture will speed up into a blur and disappear - over the horizon perhaps, like a vanishing point in painting - and another will form at one half or one quarter speed, keeping the whole in a state a balance that never quite speeds up into infinity. While slowing down, the opposite occurs: gestures continuously form at quicker speeds, keeping the whole from coming to a complete stop until the end of the phrase. You might think of *Symphonies in Slanted Time*, then, as a type of theme and variations where the variations are different ways that textures renew themselves through ever-changing tempos.

Symphonies in Slanted Time would not be possible without the generous support of the Barlow Endowment, who commissioned the work through the 2003 Barlow prize for orchestral music. It was premiered by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra in November 2005 under Mario Venzago and presented in Toronto by the Esprit orchestra conducted by Alex Pauk. Many thanks also go to the Bogliasco Foundation as well as to the MacDowell Colony.

Press Quotes:

"A full orchestra winding itself up and racing through the curves, with a mad shifting profusion of detail in the scoring, was a miraculous apparition. Like any few pages from Rabelais, it impressed you with its giddy, lawless demand for more, and still more."

– Robert Everett Green, the Globe and Mail

"a piece constantly accelerating in time....producing something novel, striking, noteworthy, memorable, enduring."

- Tom Aldrige – *Nuvo* (Indianapolis)