

LIGHTNING & LOVE



Eight o'clock, Friday, September 13, 1996
Campus Auditorium

Robert W. Demaree, Jr.
Dean of the Arts



DIVISION OF THE ARTS

Notes by the Composer

Lighting Music is an improvisation which exploits the *Lighting II*, an electronic Musical instrument designed and built by Donald Buchla, one of the great pioneers of early electronic music who now is inventing innovative MIDI controllers like the *Lighting II*. The instrument has three parts: a **sensor unit**, which detects and decodes infrared signals from **two wands** which are held in the hands of one or two players—the decoded information (position, direction, velocity of wand movements) is further processed by a **master unit**, which converts the information into MIDI code which can trigger either its internal synthesizer, or external synthesizers.

Since we acquired the *Lighting II* in June, 1996, we have discovered that this instrument provides much more expressive control over the dimensions of electronic music than one can experience with a keyboard controller. What is even more fascinating and challenging is that one must practice on this instrument, as one would practice on a "real" (that is, conventional) musical instrument like a violin or clarinet, in order to achieve the kinesthetic skills necessary to control the expression of the music being created.

The most eloquent introduction to the material of *Love Alone*—the poetry—is Paul Monette's Preface to the collection:

"Wilfred Owen's *Preface* to the poems he wrote in 1917 and 1918 is the best caution I know against beauty and eloquence. He begs us not to read his anthem for the doomed youth of his generation as a decorous celebration of heroes. Decorum is the contemptible pose of the politicians and preachers, the hypocrite slime whose grinning hatred slicks this dying land like rotten morning dew. I do not presume on the nightmare of Owen's war—may the boys of Flanders be spared all comparison—and I don't pretend to have written the anthem of my people. But I would rather have this volume filed under AIDS than under Poetry, because if these words speak to anyone they are for those who are mad with loss, to let them know they are not alone.

"Roger Horwitz, my beloved friend, died on 22 October 1986, after nineteen months of fighting the ravages of AIDS. He was forty-four years old, the happiest man I ever knew. He fought with an immensity of spirit that transfigured us who loved him. On his grave are Plato's last words on Socrates: *the wisest and justest and best*. Rog had a constitutional aversion to bullshit and was incapable of being unkind. Though he held two degrees from Harvard—a Ph.D. in comparative Literature and a law degree—he made no show of it. The only thing he ever bragged about were his three bohemian years in Paris in his early twenties, and he didn't so much boast of them as endlessly give them away.

As a courtesy to the artists and to other members of the audience, latecomers will be seated at an appropriate time. For the same reasons return to seating following intermission should be prompt. Attendance by children under the age of responsible behavior is discouraged. Audio and video recording equipment and cameras may not be used at a performance in any auditorium of IUSB. Eating and drinking in the Campus Auditorium, Recital Hall and Upstage are prohibited. Smoking is not permitted in any building of Indiana University South Bend.

Love Alone is "about AIDS." Why do art about AIDS? This is another form of a question I was asked in 1991, after PLATO and Western Tradition did a piece about Operation Desert Storm—Why do you make war the subject of your art? Art is a product of culture. The idea that a work of art somehow exists separate from, apart from, the culture in which it is created, may be useful in criticism, where it is sometimes useful to consider the properties, forms, and values of an art work without reference to the context in which the work was created or in which it now exists. But creating art is not criticism, creating art is not aesthetics. It is making and doing, and the source of that making and doing is the life of the artist, which is a life lived in a here and a now, in a time and a place.

AIDS is a part of the here and now of Michiana in the 1990's, as it is a part of the here and now of societies around the world. I have been disturbed by the fact that although IUSB has a population of young adults who presumably are sexually active, there is no organized effort under way on this campus to provide information and education about the prevention of HIV transmission. Doing art, doing this piece "about AIDS" is my way of reminding all of us that the problems of HIV and AIDS are *our* problems; it is our own selves, our friends, our families that are threatened.

Our performance of this piece is also in memory of and in tribute to all of the men and women in our community and around the world, who have been taken from us with so much yet to be said or sung, so much talent that never was used to make or do art.

Although doing this piece was my idea, without the enthusiastic participation of Randy Colborn, this art could not have been made. Thanks, Randy.

David K. Barton

The texts of the Preface quoted in these notes, and the poems used in the performance are copyright, Paul Monette, and are used by permission.

"These elegies were written during the five months after he died, one right after the other, with hardly a half day's pause between. Writing them quite literally kept me alive, for the only time I wasn't wailing and trembling was when I was hammering at these poems. I have let them stand as raw as they came. But because several friends have wished for a few commas or a stanza break here and there, I feel I should make a comment on their form. I don't mean them to be impregnable, though I admit I want them to allow no escape, like a hospital room, or indeed a mortal illness.

"In the summer of 1984 Roger and I were in Greece together, and for both of us it was a peak experience that left us dazed and slightly giddy. We'd been together for ten years, and life was very sweet. On the high bluff of ancient Thera, looking out across the southern Aegean toward Africa, my hand grazed a white marble block covered edge to edge with Greek characters, line after precise line. The marble was tilted face up to the weather, its message slowly eroding in the rain. "I hope somebody's recorded all this," I said, realizing with a dull thrill of helplessness that this was the record, right here on this stone.

"When I began to write about AIDS during Roger's illness, I wanted a form that would move with breathless speed, so I could scream if I wanted and rattle on and empty my Uzi into the air. The marbles of Greece kept coming back to mind. By the time Roger died the form was set-not quite marble, not quite Greek-but it was in my head that if only a fragment remained in the future, to fade in the sulfurous rain, it would say how much I love him and how terrible was the calamity.

"The story that endlessly eludes the decorum of the press is the death of a generation of gay men. What is written here is only one man's passing and one man's cry, a warrior burying a warrior. May it fuel the fire of those on the front lines who mean to prevail, and of their friends who stand in the fire with them. We will not be bowed down or erased by this. I learned too well what it means to be a people, learned in the joy of my best friend what all the meaningless pain and horror cannot take away-that all there is is love. Pity us not."

Los Angeles
29 June 1987

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Program

Lightning Music

Plato & the Western Tradition
A Postmodern Improvisation Ensemble
David K. Barton, Boyd Nutting, Evie Barton

Intermission

Love Alone

J. Randy Colborn, Recitation, Staging & Lighting Design
David K. Barton, Music and Sound Design
Texts from *LOVE ALONE: 18 Elegies for Rog* (1988), by Paul Monette
Here
Gardenias
The Worrying
Manifesto
The House on Kings Road
Brother of the Mount of Olives

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