

Dreaming of Virtuosity

Breathless. Difficult. Obsessive. Audacious. Abstract. Shimmering. Extreme. . . .

Such adjectives come to mind when I consider the impact of Michael Byron's latest composition for solo piano. Byron has been writing piano music for more than thirty years (having produced twelve solo or multiple-keyboard pieces to date), but if we compare his earliest modest effort for solo piano, *Song of the Lifting Up of the Head* (1972) with his most recent achievement recorded here, *Dreamers of Pearl* (2004–05), we might be perplexed by the differences in scope, scale, material, complexity, and technical demands. The pieces have in common a sensitivity for the sound of the piano, a sensibility of extended playing/listening, and a sustained attention toward repetition through seemingly unsystematic processes that gradually transform what we hear. Both pieces create situations demanding a great deal of relaxed yet relentless concentration on the part of the performer and the listener. Indeed, *Dreamers of Pearl* belongs to a rare class of recent piano music—monumental compositions of great length, beauty, and depth—all self-consciously bound to traditional piano genres and their deeply ingrained structures, yet inventive and thrilling in ways that inspire only a few brave pianists to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to these often mercilessly difficult pieces. Joseph Kubera, the tremendously gifted pianist for whom *Dreamers of Pearl* was written, is one of those brave few.

Los Angeles, Toronto, New York

Michael Byron was born in 1953 in Chicago, and spent his childhood in Los Angeles where he played trumpet from second grade on. Briefly, around age six, he had piano lessons with his aunt; he also studied trumpet with Mario Guarneri of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Byron met the budding percussionist (and already then new-music fan and record collector) William Winant in junior high school, and they became lifelong friends. Byron's musical life in Los Angeles after graduating from high school in 1971 was enriched by his meeting the composer James Tenney in the autumn of that year. Soon thereafter he met Peter Garland (another lifelong musical friend), Lou Harrison, William Colvig, Robert Ashley (then at Mills College), and others active in the West Coast new-music scene. Byron's subsequent teacher-student relationship with Tenney in particular, not to mention the personal friendship they shared from 1971 on, would become one of Byron's most consequential and enriching musical encounters.

In addition to these key acquaintances, Byron's compositional trajectory—what might be characterized in some circles as a “second-generation West Coast minimalist” (at least in those days)—was shaped specifically by his association with the early experiments of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). CalArts started in Burbank in 1970 with the help of Disney family money; the school's move to Valencia was completed in the fall of 1972. The radical curriculum constituted nothing less than a pedagogical revolution that was particularly in tune with the adventurous zeitgeist of California during the early 1970s. Mel Powell and Morton Subotnick headed the composition and electronic music programs, Bob Brown and Nicholas England headed the World Music department. Byron's teachers included both Tenney and Richard Teitelbaum. In particular, Tenney's presence brought a focus on new American music neglected by other university music department curricula at the time (including a class on John Cage allegedly co-taught by Teitelbaum and Tenney).

Teitelbaum's time at CalArts ended in June 1972, and he accepted an appointment at the Chicago Art Institute. A year later, Byron left CalArts with plans to continue his studies with Teitelbaum in Chicago; instead he found himself in Toronto, Ontario, where Teitelbaum had taken a job at York University, in the Music Department headed by the Canadian musicologist Austin Clarkson. A lively new-music scene took root in Toronto and in the nearby town of Maple, where several members of that scene lived. Eventually Tenney would also arrive to teach at York (and to live in Maple as well), and an avant-garde network grew to include David Rosenboom and Jacqueline Humbert (both of whom Teitelbaum had urged Byron to seek out), Cynthia Liddell, George Manupelli, Barbara Mayfield, Larry Polansky, and many others during the mid-1970s. Byron eventually earned a "B.A. in Arts with Specialized Honors in Music" from York in June, 1975. (Byron's friend Winant, too, went to Toronto in 1975, where he earned a B.F.A. degree.) After finishing school Byron taught at York for about two years, and then left permanently for New York City. There he wrote a variety of loud loosely-scored hardcore art rock/punk/noise works, performed by Byron with his friend Rhys Chatham, for lower Manhattan's club scene during the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the same time he was frequently engaged as a copyist and editor on various projects for La Monte Young, Robert Ashley, and others, and became involved with new ventures like The Kitchen, where, in 1980, his chamber piece *Tidal* was performed with the composer Julius Eastman conducting (*Tidal* was originally issued as an LP on Glenn Branca's Neutral Records and recently re-released on Cold Blue Records). Byron has lived in the New York City area ever since.

"We Had No Money, We Just Had an Idea"¹: Composers Inside Publishing

Byron's generation of American experimentalists, and many older composers in their network (Philip Corner [b. 1933], Eric Richards [b. 1935], Daniel Goode [b. 1936], Malcolm Goldstein [b. 1936], David Mahler [b. 1944], Barbara Benary [b. 1946], David Rosenboom [b. 1947], etc.) have not been represented in any way by mainstream music publishers. As a result, or perhaps *in spite of* an aura of neglect, many of them have thrived in the field of self-publishing composers' collectives, independent distribution, and independent composers' performing organizations that decisively support the production of unconventional and improvisatory new American ensemble music. Historical models like Henry Cowell's New Music Society and his related publications (roughly between 1927 and 1958) provided inspiration, as did composer-organized events, such as the Tenney-Goldstein-Corner Tone Roads concert series (starting in New York around 1963). From 1967 until 1971, the influential Davis, California-based multi-media composers' forum called *Source: Music of the Avant-Garde* published eleven unique volumes containing articles, scores, recordings, and interviews by and with composer-performers working in non-academic ways. Peter Garland started his Soundings Press series in 1971 after attending a publishing workshop with Dick Higgins at CalArts. Kenneth Gaburo founded Lingua Press in 1974. Later followed the composer-driven collective Frog Peak Music (founded by Jody Diamond and Larry Polansky), which currently provides a repository and a publishing/distribution center for dozens of independent and experimental composer-performers in this network. It is worth noting, however, that though Byron is an active member of the Frog Peak collective, he frequently prints, copies, binds, and distributes his music himself, and at his own expense.

¹ Byron, interview with Rebecca Stuhlbarg, on Santa Cruz (CA) public radio KUSP, April 23, 2006.

In the spirit of these initiatives mentioned above, Byron himself produced three historically significant publications during the mid-1970s: *Pieces: An Anthology* (1975–76); *Pieces: A Second Anthology* (1976); and *Pieces 3* (1977). The first soft-cover edition of *Pieces: An Anthology* was financed in part by York University (with support from Austin Clarkson); the hardcover second edition of the first *Pieces* volume was published by the Aesthetic Research Centre (A.R.C.) in Vancouver, Canada, which had been founded by instrument builder/musical sculptor (and A.R.C. chief editor) John Grayson, whom Byron and Peter Garland sought out, at the suggestion of Lou Harrison, in Vancouver in the summer of 1972.² Byron privately financed all other editions. It is notable that these publications appeared at the same time as the German composer Walter Zimmermann's unprecedented interview collection called *Desert Plants: Conversations with 23 American Musicians*, also published by the A.R.C. in 1976.³

The first *Pieces* anthology documents a body of post-minimalist process pieces, and new works and writings by Marion Brown, Harold Budd, Byron (his *Music for Every Night* for four rattles and four marimbas), Peter Garland, John Grayson, David Mahler, Tom Nixon, David Rosenboom, Frederic Rzewski (including his essay “Private or Collective?”), Teitelbaum (a shakuhachi piece employing shakuhachi notation), Tenney (including his *Three Pieces for Drum Quartet* and the *Spectral Canon for Conlon Nancarrow* for harmonic player piano), and Stephan von Huene (then acting dean at CalArts). The second *Pieces*, in which Byron gave special thanks to Harrison and Colvig, included works by Charles Amirkhania, Robert Ashley (a lecture written for a symposium in Rome), Marion Brown, Byron (his *Entrances* for David Rosenboom; and *Song of the Lifting Up of the Head*, dedicated to Peter Garland, 1972), Harold Budd, Philip Corner (non-traditional gamelan pieces), David Behrman (*Cello With Melody-Driven Electronics*), Lou Harrison (the previously-unpublished fifty-six page handwritten full score of his *Pacifika Rondo* “for an orchestra of Western and oriental instruments” of 1963), Daniel Lentz, David Mahler, Thomas Miller, David Reck, Rosenboom, and Tenney's *Chorales for Orchestra*.

The preface to *Pieces 3* admitted the ambition of its editor but also revealed that the series was in trouble. “I intend to do all that is possible to continue publishing PIECES on a more regular basis,” Byron wrote. He continued:

Much will depend on increased funding and book sales, but if as I very much hope, this materializes, I will attempt to publish at least two issues each year. Efforts are being made to find some channel for the International distribution of PIECES. To date these have been unsuccessful; a response from anyone with ideas concerning this would be very welcome.

² According to a description printed in the first *Pieces* anthology, the A.R.C. was “an incorporated, non-profit organization dedicated to innovative research and development in the areas of art, human development, and the extended nature of man.” (*Pieces: An Anthology* [Vancouver: A.R.C. Publications, 1976]: 176.) At the time of the appearance of the first *Pieces*, A.R.C. had published collections and recordings related to sound sculpture, biofeedback and the arts, “environments of musical sculpture,” and brainwave music.

In the front matter of the first *Pieces*, a blurb labeled “About the Editor” reports that Byron was at the time the editor and publisher of *Pieces Profile Series* (a planned series of publications focusing on individual composers—though Byron actually produced just one, in 1975, called *From Wheelock Mountain: Music and Writings of Malcolm Goldstein*)—and was also the editor of the *Journal of Experimental Aesthetics*, a serial publication launched by the A.R.C. in 1974.

³ The only composers who overlapped in both Byron's three *Pieces* anthologies and Zimmermann's *Desert Plants* were Robert Ashley, Philip Corner, Alvin Lucier, David Rosenboom, Frederic Rzewski, Richard Teitelbaum, and James Tenney. During his research for *Desert Plants* Zimmermann stayed in Maple, Ontario, with Byron and David Rosenboom. They consequently put him in touch with John Grayson at the A.R.C., which published the first print run of *Desert Plants*.

The third—and, indeed, final—*Pieces* volume included works by Byron (his massive *A Living Room at the Bottom of a Lake*), Philip Corner (more gamelan and percussion pieces), Alvin Curran (selections from his 48-piece collection called *Music for Every Occasion*), Paul Drescher, Peter Garland (including his review essay titled “The Experimental Music Catalogue”), Malcolm Goldstein, Daniel Goode, Dick Higgins, Alvin Lucier (*Music on a Long Thin Wire*), and Tom Nixon.

All three *Pieces* volumes emphasized a dedication to living composers, to diversity in sound sources, and to a wide variety of experimental and idiosyncratic methods of notation. Byron’s respect for and devotion to the music of his peers is evident in the dedications of these volumes: The first, “Dedicated, warmly, to the composers whose music and ideas appear in this volume”; and the second, “my personal association with the composers whose work appears here has been a constant source of inspiration and energy.” His compositions, too, were (and are) often dedicated to his peers and mentors like Rosenboom and Tenney, and later others, including Harold Budd, Louis Goldstein, Eric Richards, and Richard Teitelbaum.

Byron’s Sound World

To date, Byron has composed some forty-seven works for percussion, keyboard, solo instruments, chamber groups and various mixed ensembles.⁴ The biographical paragraph he included in the front matter of the first *Pieces* anthology described him as “a composer-performer whose recent work involves the application of open and predesigned forms to both formalized and ‘real-time’ composition.” His “early” music (approximately 1972-82) could be seen as belonging to a tradition of pieces that explore gradual processes, and focus to a large degree on percussion, repetition, extended forms, and other characteristics generally associated with “minimalism.” Indeed he has admitted that he “was associated very closely with that movement of reduced resources,” and that he felt that reducing sound resources offered compositional opportunities “too beautiful to pass up.”⁵ His later works (1995 to the present) retain some techniques traceable to classic minimalism, but demonstrate a more complex treatment of rhythmic and modal modulation, as well as richer contrapuntal textures.

Some early works like *Starfields* (1974), for two pianists, focus on clusters and an increasing density of events within one-second timeframes, becoming very thick at the end. One year later Byron composed *Entrances* for the composer-pianist David Rosenboom (the piece was revised in a realization for four pianos in 2000). The solo piano score represents a spatial idea of lengthening phrases, and the material expresses mathematical principles (the Gaussian distribution function, for example), proportional relationships between tempi and the amount of notes played, and “expanding and contracting pitch sets” (as it was explained in a Mills College concert program). The piece’s instructions are symptomatic of his approach, as they allow some freedom within an integrated methodical process:

Rhythm corresponds to the density of the work as it changes throughout the performance. The tempo at which pitches are sequenced bears a direct relationship proportional to the number of pitches played simultaneously. The duration between pitches should increase and decrease proportionally with the number of pitches played simultaneously.

⁴ A few of these works, however, contain many internal works, such as *156 Pieces for String Instruments* (1979), *200 Pieces for Keyboard Instruments* (1980), and *Eighty Pieces for String Instruments* (1995–96).

⁵ Byron, interview with Rebecca Stuhlbarg, on Santa Cruz (CA) public radio KUSP, April 23, 2006.

Byron's *Piano* "for John Cage" (1977), written on the occasion of Cage's sixty-fifth birthday (the two composers had met one year earlier), consists mostly of chords that dissolve into arpeggios over time. Typical of many of his early gradual process pieces (like *Music for Every Night*), the piece has no meter or rhythm, and each bar is one second long (as in *Starfields*). *Piano* presents an element of consistency in terms of motion and dynamic level (loud throughout). Also from 1977, Byron's large process piece *A Living Room at the Bottom of a Lake* is described in the skeletal open score as "improvisational," as "the work's eventual shape will depend on each improviser's musical judgment." This ensemble piece, which seeks "maximum variation within the fabric," contrasts the colors of keyboards-plus-mallet percussion against "sustaining instruments." Here, the pitches within each ten-second measure are "sequenced quickly at a tempo of five-to-eight pitches per second"—as in other pieces from this period, Byron wishes for "an approximate correlation between 'duration' and the number of pitches played simultaneously." He adds that the general feel of the piece should be "momentum and continuity." Indeed, momentum and continuity, forward motion and tenacious consistency, could be viewed as reliable features of nearly all of his music. Byron's last composition from this period, called *Tidal* (1981; revised 2001, dedicated to Richard Teitelbaum), is a fifteen-minute-long piece for two pianos, synthesizer, and string quintet. The piece is scored entirely in common meter, but the piece's texture, not unlike *A Living Room at the Bottom of a Lake*, offers a sense of surging; once it gets going, it becomes strong and wave-like, with a fluid and relentless forward motion. The haunting and hypnotic texture is similar to many of his other works; here the pianos create cumulative arpeggios, adding one pitch at a time slowly over the duration of the piece, sequencing them freely.

Byron's later works (from the mid-1990s on) include *Music for Two Pianos* (1995); *Continents of City and Love* (2001, for Harold Budd) for two pianos, synthesizer, and string quintet; and his recent piano quintet *Alone in the Treasure Room* (2006), which is part of a set of four quintets (in progress) based on rhythmic and modular principles similar to those presented in *Dreamers of Pearl*. Byron's four-hand piano work *Evaporated Pleasure* (2001; dedicated to Sarah Cahill and Joseph Kubera)—a work the composer himself describes as "unforgiving, intense, very difficult to write, very difficult to perform, and very difficult to listen to"—demonstrates various levels of his recent compositional thinking. In this work, Byron explains, the keyboard is literally split in half, and "pitch material [is] based on an abstraction of the harmonic and subharmonic series, with A equaling fifty-five cycles per second, up to the twenty-first partial." He claims that this approach is not taken for acoustical reasons, but has the effect of "absolutely dividing the piano symmetrically," and creating "a network of asymmetrical surprises." In this piece as in others, Byron describes his interest as "not causal relationships but meaningful simultaneities: where those might occur, and where those silences might occur, according to certain degrees of probability."⁶

Byron's recent works frequently continue developing ideas he explored during the 1970s: free tremolo; additive/subtractive arch forms (in addition to dynamic arch forms); cumulative structures that build density slowly over time; sparse unchanging ideas; measurements in seconds rather than meter; complex, asymmetrical divisions of the beat; lengthy, sustained, continuous textures; processes that seem to engage a pattern and then run their course without interruption. Many of these characteristics are crystallized in *Dreamers of Pearl*.

⁶ Byron, interview with Rebecca Stuhlbarg, on Santa Cruz (CA) public radio KUSP, April 23, 2006.

Dreamers of Pearl

Byron originally conceived of *Dreamers of Pearl* as an approximately twenty-minute solo vehicle for pianist Joseph Kubera. Since receiving the completed, yet near hour-long (!) score, Kubera has performed the work in full or in parts some half-dozen times since the Dartmouth College premiere in January 2006. Remarkably, given the complexity of the work and the idiomatic nature of his keyboard writing, Byron composes at neither the computer nor at the piano. He has been overheard referring to himself, certainly ironically, as “the last of the Romantic composers,” yet despite the lyrical (and, one might assume, programmatic) titles of the three movements, *Dreamers of Pearl* is a self-contained piece of pure (“absolute”) music without obvious quotation or extra-musical references. *Dreamers* makes its case within a classically-balanced architectural design: three extended “fast-slow-fast” movements of roughly equal length (263, 199, and 226 measures, respectively). The notation is meticulous, specific, precise. Much of the work’s texture could be characterized as Baroque, given the perpetual motion of the consistent two-voiced polyphonic layering—some of it cryptically and distortedly imitative. Byron has described the work as a “long string of abstract counterpoint operations” in which, according to pianist Kubera, the rhythmic content of every beat in every measure is “not only asymmetrical, but is different from every other beat.”⁷ (This is true for the entire piece except for the very end of the last movement.)

The first movement, “Enchanting the Stars,” is scored in 4/4 throughout; the right hand is given a B-flat major key signature while the left hand has a blank slate. Despite the implied bitonality, the movement presents a gradual modulation of material, a constant introduction of new pitch fields, and gradual changes to the rhythmic content. Occasionally, synchronized material between the parts surprises the ear. Repeated note figures are gradually introduced, and these have the effect of further limiting the material, becoming a kind of a hokey game between the hands themselves. There are slight, almost imperceptible tempo changes, as the piece gradually gets a little faster as it goes along. Scalar, arpeggiated, or repeated material alternate with space, with small gestures and odd flourishes [See Ex. 1]. Neither hand stays in its designated “key signature,” but continuity is achieved in part through the uniformity of dynamics, articulation, motion, and an overall feeling of detachedness. A slight accelerando and crescendo hurries toward the end, and the motion suddenly breaks off, completely unexpectedly.

[Ex. 1: *Dreamers of Pearl*, end of first movement, “Enchanting the Stars,” Mm. 259-263.]

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the end of the first movement of *Dreamers of Pearl*. Each system consists of a right-hand staff (treble clef) and a left-hand staff (bass clef). The right-hand staff has a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The notation is complex, featuring polyphonic layering with frequent sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are various articulations, including slurs and accents, and some dynamic markings like *mf*. The first system starts at measure 259, the second at 261, and the third at 263. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand.

⁷ Byron, with Joseph Kubera, interview with Rebecca Stuhlbarg, on Santa Cruz (CA) public radio KUSP, 23 April 2006.

To this listener's ears, the second movement, "A Bird Revealing the Unknown to the Sky," is a thing of pure beauty. In contrast to the angular, disjunct, atonal-sounding first movement, the music heard here seems diatonic/modal, smooth, directional, sustained, intimate, and expressive [See Ex. 2].

[Ex. 2: *Dreamers of Pearl*, second movement, "A Bird Revealing the Unknown to the Sky," Mm. 1-6.]

Periodic half-step modulations (usually heard one measure before a key signature alteration appears in the score) continually shade the modality in a way that gives the impression of repeatedly viewing a painting or a landscape under different conditions of light. Throughout the movement, the repetition of certain notes (though, like birdsong, never repeated precisely), the outlines of chords, reinforce our orientation, our familiarity with them—and our listening comfort is thus ensured. Accented pitches create a kind of three-dimensional space where some events seem to appear in an aural foreground. A captivating section in the middle of the second movement evokes the impression that the fluttering melodic figures, the emphatic chords, and the arpeggiated grace notes are all different expressions of the same “obsessive image” (in the composer’s words) [SEE EX. 3].⁸ The chords drop out after a while and the movement progresses to a final section of purely ascending motion, striving for a goal of F-natural.

⁸ Byron uses the phrase “obsessive image” to describe a compositional approach descending from Carl Ruggles and Edgard Varèse in which “every piece is a further realization of that image,” as opposed to the “radical eclecticism” of Charles Ives, for example.

[Ex. 3: *Dreamers of Pearl*, second movement, “A Bird Revealing the Unknown to the Sky,” Mm. 127-132.]

The image shows a musical score for the second movement of *Dreamers of Pearl*, measures 127-132. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and various articulations such as slurs and accents. Roman numerals (IV, V, VI) are placed above notes to indicate chord structures. The notation is dense and expressive, with many slurs and dynamic markings.

“It Is the Night and Dawn of Constellations Irradiated,” the third movement, starts with the same disjunct two-voice texture of the first movement, but has a more clearly imitative feel. The motives and gestures are shorter, more arrested [SEE EX. 4]. It seems that this music is gasping for breath, starting and stopping, as if searching for the next pitch to fill in the sequence, or a cipher to crack the code.

[Ex. 4: *Dreamers of Pearl*, third movement, “It Is the Night and Dawn of Constellations Irradiated,” Mm. 1-4.]

The image shows a musical score for the third movement of *Dreamers of Pearl*, measures 1-4. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by a disjunct two-voice texture with short, arrested motives. Above the first system, the word "Legato" is written. Below the first system, the instruction "Discretionary Dynamics, *mf* to *f*" is present. Below the second system, the instruction "Pedal Freely (exceptions are notated)" is written. The notation includes slurs, accents, and dynamic markings, with Roman numerals (IV, V) indicating chord structures.

[Ex. 5: *Dreamers of Pearl*, third movement, “It Is the Night and Dawn of Constellations Irradiated,” Mm. 223-26.]

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The music is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The notation is highly complex and dense, featuring rapid sixteenth-note passages, frequent accidentals, and a variety of articulation marks such as accents and slurs. The first system covers measures 223 through 225, and the second system covers measures 226 through 228. The overall texture is intricate and rhythmic, characteristic of experimental or postmodern piano music.

One of the fascinating aspects of this movement is how that space gets filled until there is no more space, just notes filling it completely, ascending and descending strings of pitches, relentless in their drive up or down. [Ex. 5] Careful listeners to *Dreamers of Pearl* will be rewarded with the mystery and constancy of Byron’s “obsessive image” by confronting the work’s thematic characters, the gestural languages they speak, the rhythmic puzzles they solve, and the harmonic landscapes they negotiate. In the end, they conquer that landscape, as the breathtaking coda to this tour-de-force seems to suggest.

—Amy C. Beal

Amy C. Beal is an Associate Professor of Music at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She contributed liner notes for Works for Violin by Antheil, Beyer, Cowell, Dodge, Crawford, Mahler, Polansky, Wolpe (New World Records 80641) and has recently published a book on the history of American experimental music in West Germany, New Music, New Allies (University of California Press, 2006).

Michael Byron (b. 1953, Chicago) grew up in Los Angeles. He was a pupil of James Tenney at the newly created California Institute of the Arts, and later, with Richard Teitelbaum at York University. His music has been performed and recorded by such noted soloists and ensembles as Sarah Cahill, the FLUX Quartet, Joseph Kubera, Jenny Lin, Aki Takahashi, and the William Winant Percussion Ensemble. He taught on the Faculty of Fine Arts at York University, and was editor-publisher of *Pieces*, a small press devoted to the increased visibility of exploratory directions in American music.

Byron is a composer of instrumental music. The formal organization in his scores is meticulously notated, harmonically rich, and rhythmically intricate. It is also exclusively virtuosic. His furthest effort in this direction is heard in the one-hour work, *Dreamers of Pearl*, composed for the pianist Joseph Kubera. He is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council, as well as numerous commissions and residencies. His scores are available from the composers’ collective Frog Peak Music. Four CDs of his music have been released on Cold Blue Records, two of which are exclusively devoted to his music.

Pianist **Joseph Kubera** has been a leading interpreter of contemporary music for the past three decades. He has been a soloist at such festivals as the Warsaw Autumn, Prague Spring, and Berlin Inventionen Festival of the DAAD. Michael Byron, Anthony Coleman, David First, Alvin Lucier, Roscoe Mitchell, and “Blue” Gene Tyranny, among others, have written works for him. A longtime Cage advocate, he has recorded the *Music of Changes* and *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, and toured with the Cunningham Dance Company at Cage’s invitation. Mr. Kubera has been awarded grants through the NEA Solo Recitalist Program and the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts.

Mr. Kubera is a core member of S.E.M. Ensemble, the DownTown Ensemble, and Ostravska Banda, and he has performed with a wide range of New York ensembles and orchestras ranging from Steve Reich and Musicians to the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He tours with new-music baritone Thomas Buckner, and such luminaries as Terry Riley and Ingram Marshall have written for his duo-piano team with Sarah Cahill. Mr. Kubera’s solo playing may be heard on the Wergo, Albany, New Albion, New World, Lovely Music, O.O. Discs, Mutable Music, Cold Blue, and Opus One labels. His Web site is www.josephkubera.com.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Awakening at the Inn of the Birds. Cold Blue CB 0012.
Elegant Detours. Included on *Marty Walker: Dancing on Water*. Cold Blue CB 5.
Marimbas in the Dorian Mode. Included on *Cold Blue*. Cold Blue CB 8.
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Dreamers of Pearl (2004-05) 53:24
I. Enchanting the Stars 17:58
II. A Bird Revealing the Unknown to the Stars 16:40
III. It Is the Night and Dawn of Constellations Irradiated 18:44
Joseph Kubera, piano

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