Music for the End of Time

"Music for the End of Time" is based on the *Book of Revelation* and in essence is a dramatic tone poem for trombone and computer.   These are the movements and the verses they are based upon:

I. A Door Was Opened in Heaven,

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven… (Rev. 4:1.)

II. The Sea of Glass

And before the throne was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. (Rev. 4.6)

III. The Four Horsemen

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. (Rev. 9:17)

IV. As It Were A Trumpet Talking

...and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. (Rev. 4:1.)

V. The White Beast

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)

VI. A Woman Clothed With the Sun

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. (Rev. 12:1

We were drawn to the *Book of Revelation* more by its rich imagery and symbolism than any sort of doctrinaire religious belief. At times, St. John's writing is quite transcendent, but at others, its embittered visions are almost insanely horrific. In this sense, parts of "Music for the End of Time" follow in the traditions of "crazy" composers as exemplified by Mussorgsky's "Night On Bald Mountain," Berlioz's "Symphony Fantastique," and some of the deeply bi-polar melancholy/exuberance of Schumann and Mahler. In some cases, it is exactly this form of "folly" that allows for transcendental experience. We found that the cinematic bias of MIDI technology was more useful for creating the large dramatic arch of "Music for the End of Time" than more advanced instruments like MAX/MSP and C-Sound.

When approaching apocalyptic visions, which are often very violent, it is important to carefully consider their implications. On one hand, these visions have helped humans appreciate the extreme limitation of our existential

Abbie Conant

Abbie Conant is somewhat of a legend in the brass world. She was principal trombone of the Munich Philharmonic for 13 years and recorded a critically acclaimed CD entitled, Trombone and Organ/Posaune und Orgel. The story of her struggle for equal treatment and the same pay as her male colleagues in the Munich Philharmonic appeared in the *Wall Street Journal, Der Spiegel* and many other newspapers and makes up the last chapter of Malcolm Gladwell's book *Blink* which was on the New York Times bestseller list for 18 weeks. A full length documentary called, "Abbie Conant, Alone Among Men," was aired several times on 3-SAT European television.   With her composer-husband William Osborne she has created a grippingly dramatic repertoire of music theatre works for acting/singing trombonist. The artist couple has toured to over 140 cities in Europe and the USA with their own multimedia productions. Abbie has given masterclasses at the Juilliard School, Indiana University, Yale School of Music, New England Conservatory, Eastman School of Music, Manchester School of Music among many others. She has been a juror on several international trombone competitions including Porcia, Geneva, Lieksa and the N.A. Rimksy Korsakov. The *International Trombone Association Journal* has featured Abbie Conant in a cover article and described her as "in the first rank of world class trombonists". She performs internationally as a concerto soloist, recitalist, improviser and performance artist. In 1992 the Baden-Württenberg State Ministry for Education, in recognition of her international reputation as a trombonist, named her full tenured Professor of Trombone at the esteemed Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Trossingen, Germany. In 1996 the 4200 members of the International Trombone Association elected her as their President-Elect. Her International Trombone Camp, which was founded in 1987 in Germany and Italy, has featured guest artists such as Joe Alessi, Charles Vernon, Michael Mulcahy, Jiggs Whigham, Carsten Svanberg, Heinz Fadle, Stuart Dempster, Ingemar Roos, Jay Friedman and others. She has recently founded the world's first Trombone Chamber Music Institute.

William Osborne

studied with George Crumb in Philadelphia and with Franco Donatoni at the National Academy of Italy. Among his awards are two from the American Society of Authors, Composers, and Publishers, a Doctoral Fellowship to Columbia University, and a prize from the Munich Theater Commission. Since 1993 his works have been performed in over 140 cities in North America and Europe. Mr. Osborne has written numerous articles about the social and political influences of symphony orchestras including "Symphony Orchestras and Artist-Prophets" published by the M.I.T. Press. He has appeared on "Good Morning America" and NPR as well as having been the subject of a feature article by MSNBC.

Our Spring Tour Itinerary 2009

Internationaler Posauenverein Festival in Stuttgart (Featured soloist)	March 8
The University of Texas at El Paso	March 12-13
The University of Nevada at Las Vegas	March 16-17
Cal State Northridge	March 19
University of the Redlands	March 22-23
Sacramento State University	March 26-27
University of Southern Oregon	April 3-4
University of Washington	April 6-7
University of Puget Sound	April 9
San Jose State University	April 15-16
University of California, Berkeley (CNMAT)	April 17
University of Southern California	April 20
University of California, Irvine	April 22
Cal State Fullerton (Featured soloist of Trombone Day)	April 25

Contact information:

Abbie & William: abbie@osborne-conant.org
Norbert Bach: bachdigitalexpress@gmail.com

Spring Tour 2009

Abbie Conant and William Osborne

Cybeline

(A music theater work for performance-artist, video, and quadraphonic sound.)

Abbie Conant : text, cartoons, performance
William Osborne : music, video, direction

-Intermission-

Music for the End of Time

(For trombone, video and computer generated quadraphonic sound.)

I. A Door Was Opened In HeavenThe Sea of Glass
II. The Sea of Glass
III. The Four Horsemen
IV. As It Were of a Trumpet Talking
V. The White Beast
VI. A Woman Clothed With the Sun

(movements performed without pauses)

Abbie Conant, trombone
Norbert Bach, digital stills
William Osborne, music and video

condition in relation to the boundless majesty of the universe.

But apocalyptic visions can also lead to misappropriated notions of divine justice, or even divine wrath that are anything but transcendental. Such visions are often not divine at all, but rather very human expressions of contempt and hatred for those we ourselves deem unworthy. In a world that seems to increasingly reflect imperialistic hubris, and in a world with increasing beliefs about the divinity of murdering others, the dangers of misappropriated apocalyptic visions should not be underestimated.

Patriarchal transcendentalism tends toward recurrent cycles of ecstasy, revolution, destruction and lament. These polarities inform the arrangement of the movements in *Music for the End of Time*, and shape their cycles of light/darkness, drama/reflection, ecstasy/remorse. This is especially notable in "The Four Horsemen," where a sort of symphonic intensity and lamentive reflection alternate like repeated charges of horsemen.

Ultimately, the most meaningful understandings of the apocalyptic have little to do with destruction, but with vanquishing our own human limitations. Through the apocalyptic, we transcend not so much the universe, as our own self. We learn that in the infinite expanse of this world, our human passions are often the sheerest folly, and that the truest path to justice is through forgiveness, compassion and love.

Perhaps that understanding is what St. John hoped to symbolize in his vision of "The Woman Clothed with the Sun." The ultimate value of transcendental experience might be that it shows us that nothing is more precious or transcendent than the simple beauty of life itself.

Program Notes for Cybeline

Cybeline is a music theater work about a cyborg trying to be a talk show host to prove she is human. Or seen from another perspective, it's about a mad woman studying the effects of the mass media on her life. Using her own animations, she parodies interviews by speaking with imaginary characters from history, parodies talk show host's humorous lists, sings a parody of a cowboy song, jokes about opera, creates fake commercials, talks about the powers of technology, and sings a Schubert Lied about how she could serve her masters better if she were a cyborgian waterwheel with a thousand arms. She also plays the trombone and has a glove controller for a synth that allows her to make cyborgian music.

Her routines are turned on and off by an obnoxious buzzer that controls her almost like a marionette. Between routines she speaks about her life, the "scientists" who examine and program her, and eventually about the voices she hears in her head that come from goddesses who reside in the beauty of nature.

The stark delineations between Cybeline's on-air showbiz routines and her off-air reflections gradually dissolve as she delves into a story about a murdered and dismembered woman named Maxine who is reassembled by scientists to be stereotypically feminine. Strong, horrific memories of Maxine's violent murder intrude upon Cybeline's cyborgian fantasies. Cybeline senses that her internal and external worlds have been engineered by the media in the same way that Maxine was dismembered and reassembled. She wonders if even her memories are artificial creations.

Cybeline sings an excerpt from a Schubert Lied about a dream of a spring that turns out to be only flowers and birds painted on window glass, while reality is a dark winter whose sky is filled with ravens. A vision follows where she sees the ultimate expression of technology as war. After all of this, Cybeline angrily defies her "examiners" and is shutdown completely.

Cybeline was influenced by our interest in Jungian psychology. Jung felt that humans are by nature image-makers, and that those images shape our dream-like identity and perception of the world. Humanity creates art, and art creates humanity. The mass media shapes Cybeline's world, but she in turn, creates her own media universe and even rebels against the brainwashing she feels it creates.

When off the air, Cybeline's music is created through computer operations that randomly select and mix whispered phrases of words and soft music. The strong contrast between Cybeline's consciously created show-biz routines and the unconscious, random, dream-like world that evolves when she is off-air gradually merge as the work progresses. Her subconscious mind and cultural conditioning unify to create her dream-like reality.

Cybeline addresses two historical characters that it might be helpful to identify. Hildegard von Bingen was a 12th century nun, wise-woman, composer, and healer. Hypatia was a rennowned 5th century Alexandrian mathematician who was murdered by Christians who thought she was a witch.

To use the words of Samuel Beckett, Cybeline is something like an "enigma wrapped in a mystery." Even though we create our music theater works, many of their symbolic meanings only reveal themselves to us over long periods of time. In a similar way, we feel it is important for the audience to contemplate and discover their own interpretations of our work.

For an essay about Cybeline that addresses some of its historical, social, and poltical themes, see: http:www:osborne-conant.org/cybeline-info.htm

Instructions for assembling the program.

The program is copied on two letter sized sheets of paper we will call A and B

For sheet A: Copy pages [1 & 6] and [2 & 5] on the front and back of one sheet of paper.

For sheet B: Copy pages [3 & 4] on BOTH sides of one sheet of paper.

Fold sheet A in the middle.

Cut sheet B down the middle and insert it inside the folded sheet A.

Make a couple trial copies to experiment with and everything will become clear.