

Detours

“Blue” Gene Tyranny

notes by “Blue” Gene Tyranny

transcribed by Sime Viduka



13 Detours (2005)

Each of the brief harmonic discourses in 13 Detours begins at a pre-determined location and winds up at a totally unexpected place, and then when the rubber hits the road we take a brief, uncharted journey acting on impulse guided by mood to a new, unknown location.

This piece is dedicated to recordist, film-maker, composer Phil Perkins, who led me into detours in my thinking during our early years in San Francisco



George Fox Searches (2009)

This piece is dedicated to actor, teacher, singer Jeffrey Guyton who took me to my first Quaker meeting held in the Flushing Meeting House erected in 1694. I am not a believer in any doctrine, except maybe the Golden Rule (“Do unto others...”), but I have been inspired by the silent meditations and spontaneous spoken insights that have occurred at these meetings. This piece attempts to draw a parallel between Fox’s soul searching and musical improvisation.

“Stand still in that which is pure, after you see yourselves; and then mercy comes in.”

George Fox (July 1624 – 13 January 1691) believed that an authentic spirituality could be achieved by listening to the wisdom of Jesus that is inherent in each of us if we explore deeply the consciousness within that can teach us. This process he called “opening”.

In opposition to the dogmatism aligned with political (often cruel) oppression that characterized turbulent 17th century England, people were inspired by his vision. The young, tall George Fox dressed in self-made leather clothing, and sporting unfashionable long hair,

wandered about the towns, hills, and villages along the 160-mile road known as Watling Street gathering followers, some of whom were so moved in their meditations that they

literally shook thus becoming known, derisively at first, as Quakers a name they later embraced. Fox's name for them was Children of the Light or Friends of the Truth. They spoke up for human rights, non-violent resistance, love, opposition to war, compassion for the poor, equal opportunities for women, and urged people to avoid the "ways of this world" such as doffing your hats to authority or paying tithes to ministers of the official government-backed church.

Fox took a grueling trip across the North Atlantic Ocean to America with a small party of men and women Quakers. He landed first in Barbados, followed by Jamaica, Cuba, and then the Eastern Seaboard of the English colonies beginning with Maryland and New Jersey. He spoke at meetings attended by the local Quakers as well as African slaves, indentured servants, and Native Americans (note: Quakers were among the first abolitionists in the 1800s).

This piece is not a narrative of specific events in Fox's life but simulates the feelings that he may have experienced along the way. For example, we hear quasi-random sounds that may remind one of the nervous system or the English practice of "change bell" ringing.

Some of the material used for this improvisation is based upon the song "How Can I Keep From Singing?" which has long been taken as a Quaker tune or simply a traditional seasonal melody sung at wintertime. In actuality the tune was written in 1860 by Robert Lowry, who was a Baptist minister, but one who regretted having to write hymn tunes preferring instead to preach sermons. The text of the song, nevertheless, reflects much of the Quaker spirit of freedom, compassion, and hope for an honest and just world.

My life flows on in endless song:
Above earth's lamentation,

I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing;

It finds an echo in my soul –
How can I keep from singing?



She Wore Red Shoes (2004)

We see a large mandala divided into twelve pie slices constructed upon the floor. Each slice represents an influence in her life. But now serenely and unstoppably, she is abandoning those desires and needs of the foundation of her previous life. In this mandala are stacks of newspapers, sacks of coffee beans scattered by the dancers, candy bars covered with foil shining like the floor of a golden palace, a pile of rubber snakes, etc. Her glamorous red shoes betray her sense of high fashion. At the climax of the dance she proceeds forward in a noble manner until removing herself out of the circle. Then the dancers strew about the materials wildly and she gently abandons her shoes and her former life.

This music is from the dance Deal by dancer, choreographer Stefa Zaverucha, with lighting illusions by set and lighting designer David Fritz, and is dedicated to them.



Intuition (Tape 1987, Piano 2010)

(Imagine a universe as a work-in-progress and where it's headed no one can tell. When it reaches its "omega point", a state of perfection following natural disasters and harvests, all that has died is alive again. Musically, this universal perspective is a relatively closed, repeatable, and notated form.)

(Imagine a universe that continues and changes forever. In this universe you have not been "born" and you do not "die". Musically, this perspective is a relatively spontaneous, improvised process.)

Where no concept exists to choose between these cosmological images we may rely on intuition.

(Imagine that on the very edges of the known universe matter and energy fall freely in all directions. This is often considered the ultimate fate of the universe, death in a freezing void. Because something is more stable than nothing, is it possible that random encounters of matter and energy nevertheless create here cyclic movement triggered by mutual

repulsion that results in a familiar universal structure, one in which sulfur consuming proto-life evolves into oxygen consuming bilateral creatures who share one undifferentiated sense of "presence" per se --musically, the drone against which emotions are highlighted.)

Can any of these cosmological views be real? I haven't got a clue. But as Louis Pasteur famously said, "Chance favors the prepared mind". So while they are waiting for inspiration or intuition, most musicians figure out some activities to encourage those experiences (compositional processes, sonic experiments, etc.). For my part I'll try to re-imagine the nature and role of music. And to throw my lot in with those who work to save the planet. Partially this seems to involve dismantling the military-industrial complex (Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower) or to gradually modulate it into another form (for example, use the National Guard only to fight fires and floods, use the Navy for deep sea scientific exploration, etc.). And in general to transform all negative impulses and fears (the 6 Buddhist Poisons) into creative action and thought. And thought including jokes. Let's hope that the future can be one of adventure, peace, innovation, and maximum freedom.

Involuntary, spontaneous, self-teaching (heuristic), and often kind, intuition is a feeling/thought (Buckminster Fuller) that occurs at the oddest moments, awake or sleeping, and beyond human intention.

This piece is dedicated to philosopher Andrew Aldrich who I haven't seen in years but whose thoughts return to my mind often.

"Blue" Gene Tyranny – Piano and electronics

- Track 1 was recorded at Mills College Concert Hall, Oakland, CA – Feb. 14, 2005
Phillip Perkins – Recording Engineer
- Tracks 2 and 4 were recorded at Systems II, Brooklyn, NY – July 21, 2010
Tom Hamilton – Recording Engineer
- Track 3 was recorded at the Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland, CA – Feb. 20, 2005
Phillip Perkins – Recording Engineer

Tom Hamilton – Mixing and audio sweetening
Richard Sheff, Thomas Buckner – Executive Producers

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