



Collaborations and poetry are the threads connecting my recent work. I invite you to read more about these music projects online at www.spindrift.com

Check out the Music Catalog to listen, view, and purchase scores.



“Surely the rest of life matters. Surely our stewardship is its only hope.”

Dr. Edward O. Wilson
The Future of Life

News from my music studio



The Future of Life, a deeply meaningful project

I was excited to write another big choral piece in the summer of 2007 for The Master Singers of Lexington. They wanted a piece with solo trombone to go with Alan Hovhaness' "Toward the Sea". "The Future of Life" is an eight-movement piece using the words of Dr. Edward O. Wilson, whose subject is the need to protect biodiversity. His book is a warning that we need to act now and is filled with scientific and economic data. His "conversation" with Thoreau in his preface had just the words I needed to make the compelling music I envisioned. The piece ends with two beautifully expressive poems from Anne Baring and Judy Grahn. Please read Dr. Wilson's book "The Future of Life"—its message is important—and listen to the music too! Audio from the rehearsals is online. If you are a choral director, please request a perusal copy!

Art-Poem-Music: Body and Soul

I'm continuing my collaboration with poet Elizabeth Kirschner and artist Sirarpi Heghinian Walzer. In February we presented Volume 2 of Body and Soul. I've also set several of the poems as accompanied readings. "Life Is Beautiful" for reader and oboe was particularly appealing, to both oboist and audience. Read more online about Art-Poem-Music.

Poetry-Inspired Music

During 2007 I worked on several solos and duos for various instruments. Each of these solos is connected to a specific poem. In January, I presented a concert at the Depot Square Gallery that paired a reading of the poems with the solos. There were pieces for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and duos for flute and percussion. In February, the series continued with two pieces for bassoon. Poets include John Bunyan, John Gillespie Magee, Zoe Akins, Longfellow, and Mathilde Blind.

You can commission a solo for your favorite instrument and poem - call me! Or you can join the Spindrift Commissioning Guild for a set of solos for strings that I'll be working on soon (more about the Guild on the next page).

Playbook

In the spring of 2007 I led composing and improvising workshops for all the students at Pacem, the studio of piano teacher Carroll Ann Bottino in Lexington, MA. The results included a lot of fun, development of the students' musical intuition and listening skills, 23 new compositions that I wrote for each of the students, and new compositions by the students themselves. Several students played their commissioned piece and their



own piece on their spring concerts. This year, students participating in the National Piano Auditions will play the music I wrote for them. Music teachers and intermediate pianists, you'll be able to get "Playbook" with all these fun pieces soon.

South Beach Chamber Ensemble

In February 2007, I went to Miami to hear SOBE play my string quartet Truth Becoming, inspired by the poem "The Process" by May Swenson. I also met with students at the University of South Florida. I heard a fine performance, and artist Sandra Walsh did a dynamic watercolor of the performers, which is now hanging at the entrance to my studio. I'll be writing a piano quintet for SOBE in 2009.

Spindrift web site and Commissioning Guild

As of April 2008, you'll find an updated spindrift.com. You'll see new colors and better-organized pages about recent projects. Take a look! Check out the new pages in the Music Catalog for The Future of Life and Poetry-Inspired Solos and Duos for woodwinds.

In May, I'll be unveiling two new Spindrift Commissioning Guild projects: Poetry-Inspired solos for strings and Body and Soul Vol. 3. Consider joining the Guild and supporting a project. I'd also like to hear from you about music ideas you'd like to see happen. Send me an email!

Tidbits

Elusive Music - The Blog

I've got a blog at <http://elusivemusic.blogspot.com>. I started it to write about The Future of Life last fall. After I get this newsletter finished, I'm going to write more about my current projects and my experiences using Kontakt 3 and other audio tools.

Recordings

In 2007, ERMMedia started a **Holidays of the New Era** series and the first volume includes my Windshine for SATB chorus and cello, sung by a choir in Kiev.

Living Artists will release a Just In Time reunion CD this summer. It will include my **Elusive Sleep** for cello and piano. Composer Hayg Boyadjian organized the recording. Just In Time presented concerts around Boston until 2005 (www.justintimecomposers.org).

In 2004 my husband David and I visited **Costa Rica** where we watched, photographed and recorded birds. **Costa Rica Soundscape** is a CD compilation I've made of the sounds I recorded at Rancho Naturalista near Turrialba, east of San Jose. For a lover of the outdoors, it's the perfect relaxation. I brought it to my massage therapist and several of her other clients have enjoyed it too. It's going to be available soon.



Pam and the South Beach musicians:
Thomas Moore, Dustin Budish, Melissa
Palichat, and Michael Andrews



Read more about
these projects:
www.spindrift.com/news.html

Find newly published titles in the Music Catalog:
www.spindrift.com/musiclst.html

Spindrift Music Company

38 Dexter Road
Lexington, MA 02420

781-862-0884

pmarshall@spindrift.com

<http://www.spindrift.com>



A Composer's Tools

Playing a Virtual Orchestra by Pamela J. Marshall

Although I seem to write mostly music notated on paper for live performers, I've always been interested in computer tools for composing and sound design. I started my recording business because I wanted to put my audio tools to more use. Last year, I decided to invest in the sophisticated sampled orchestra sounds that are now available and spend some time learning how to create natural-sounding demos that I could use in my online catalog.

The Poetry-Inspired solos started as an orchestration exercise for these orchestra sounds. I wrote the first solo for flute to provide the musical material and I began learning how to program an expressive MIDI performance using the great-sounding orchestra samples that are available these days. I bought East West Quantum Leap Symphonic Gold last year which used Native Instruments Kompakt Player for playback. This year I got Native Instruments Kontakt 3 for playback because Kompakt no longer worked on Mac OS 10.5. When I first got the East West sounds, I loved them, but as I tried to tweak the sounds into an expressive melodic line, I found their flaws. Working with a solo instrument is a very good test. The more spare the orchestration, the more of a challenge to shape an expressive phrase. There are no other sounds to hide behind.

The East West library has a lot of articulations - various staccatos, accents, bright sounds, and covered sustained sounds. This is great for providing variety, phrase by phrase, or even note by note. The biggest problem is the variety of ambience for many of the sounds. Some are very dry and others have a lot of reverb. They don't sound like they are in the same room. Sometimes I can cover this up by blending sounds - most but not all of the various articulations are in tune with each other. I can also add reverb to the dry sounds. The result might sound acceptable over speakers, but over headphones it's hard to hide the ambience change.

I was having particular trouble getting a natural feeling on the clarinet solo "Summer Into Winter". The East West clarinet sounds were too uneven and weren't working in this exposed situation. Then I discovered that the Kontakt 3 library had Vienna Symphonic Library sounds. Those clarinet sounds were warmer and were smooth and even, giving me a good blend from note to note. The Kontakt 3 Vienna sounds don't have as many articulations as East West, but I could add East West sounds for some accents and short notes with minimal blending problems.

The tempo of the performance is just as important as the sounds. Even if the sounds aren't perfect, you can shape an expressive performance by manipulating the tempo. In my first pass at creating a free cadenza-like feel for rhapsodic solos like these, my tempo was too fast and the pauses and breaths too short. I might think it sounds dynamic and energetic, but later I'll listen and it will be hectic. It's interesting to learn how much adjustment one can make to the tempo of individual notes in a phrase to get a more expressive flow. I had to make pretty extreme slowdowns on the first note of a group to get an expressive leaning on the note.

I've got to give credit to Peter Alexander of TrueSpec Systems and Alexander University for starting me off on the Poetry-Inspired series. His poetry picks for the orchestration exercises he designed were wonderfully succinct and appropriate. He now offers this material as an online orchestration class.

Spindrift Music Company

38 Dexter Road
Lexington, MA 02420

781-862-0884

pmarshall@spindrift.com

<http://www.spindrift.com>