

EDMUND CAMPION (B. 1957)

Outside Music (2005) (Program Note by Beth Levy)

for flute, bass clarinet, harp, double bass, vibraphone, and keyboard-controlled computer/sampler

Composed for the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and made possible by a grant from the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University.

Campion's *Outside Music* is a piece that concerns "sound and experience": the sound of a unique instrumental configuration and the combined experiences of performing, listening, and composing in a new environment enabled by an innovative interaction between acoustic and digital media. Rather than treating the ensemble as a collection of distinct players coupled with electro-acoustic materials, he conceives the forces as a single "instrument" in which the keyboard/computer plays the special role of mirroring and binding the acoustic collective. Campion wrote the computer program and devised the special keyboard and pedaling system that is central to the work. He observes, "The musical score came from exploring and building the new instrument, which works both as a modeling tool for testing ideas, and a computer-based instrument for live performance." Typical of his works featuring newer technologies, the musical discourse is shaped in the interplay between the disembodied, computer-based sounds (capable of executing musical gymnastics far beyond the reach of human fingers) and the embodied, human-made sounds (whose sonic radiation, backed by the physical presence and visible gestures from the musicians, can never be matched by electronics).

"Everything depends on the keyboardist," Campion observes, making *Outside Music* a type of concerto (complete with a cadenza). The solo player can perform with traditional pianistic virtuosity, but other resources are at his/her disposal. Two pedals in four combinations allow the pianist to completely redefine the response of the keys in a split second.

Regarding the title, Campion writes, "on the surface, *Outside Music* is just music for the out-of-doors—a kind of musical road trip passing quixotically from moment to moment. Deeper, I really do want to get outside "Music", the music that values and defines itself teleologically—as structure or design of one sort or another. Getting outside of that Music means evaporating the frame. I don't mean to leave Music behind. I mean disappearing the walls, turning the gaze 180 degrees, and trying to glimpse some of the musical landscapes still open for settlement. The insider's Music is still there, it's just un-hinged, dreaming to be and breathe in the world.