

**JOHN PATRICK
THOMAS**

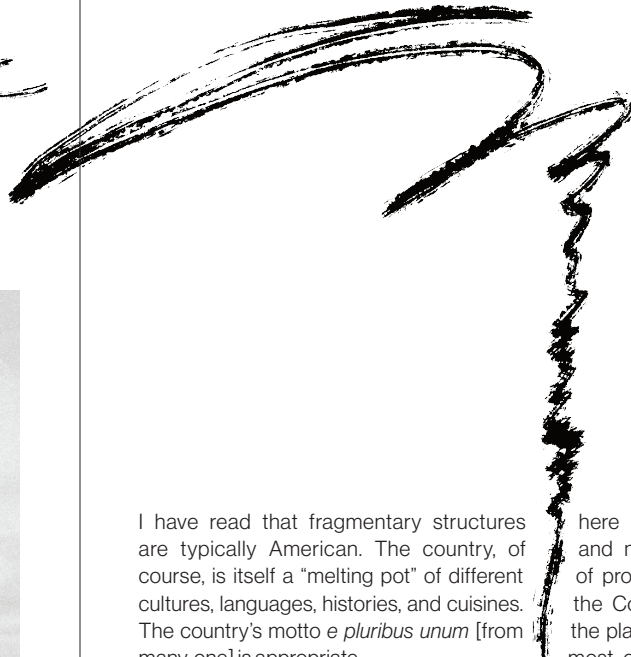
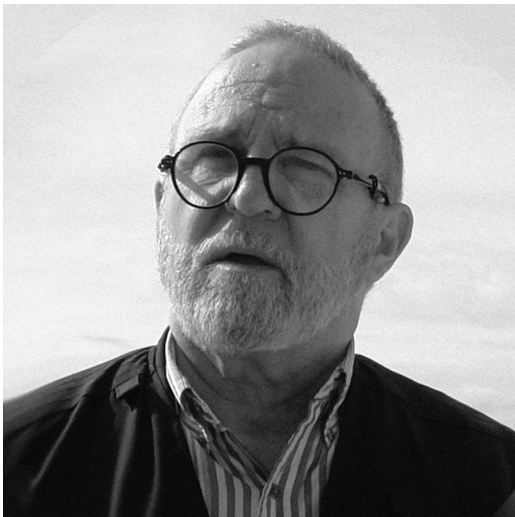
**MANY FINGERS MANY KEYS
MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS AND
PIANO FOUR HANDS (1963-2011)**



PASCAL SCHWEREN AND ROGER HOLMES, PIANOS

COMPOSER'S

COMMENTARY



I have read that fragmentary structures are typically American. The country, of course, is itself a "melting pot" of different cultures, languages, histories, and cuisines. The country's motto *e pluribus unum* [from many, one] is appropriate.

A number of pieces on this CD are examples of this fragmentary tendency; one even dates back more than 50 years. Two of the pieces are piano transcriptions of music written originally for harpsichord (presented

here as music for piano four hands and music for two pianos). Because of problems in preparation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the players chose to use two pianos for most of the four hand pieces. Though the visual aspect and some of the humor in the four hand pieces are missing in an audio presentation, the stereophonic effect shows musical differentiations in all these pieces.

PIECES FOR
JOAN
GALLEGOS

(1963)

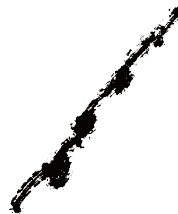
Joan Gallegos was a graduate student in the music department at the University of California in Berkeley when I arrived there in the fall of 1961. She took an interest in my music and asked me to write something we could play together. I began the piece in the summer of 1962. This was the last time I was a student in Darius Milhaud's composition class at the Aspen Festival in Colorado. I completed the work early the next winter. It won the UC Berkeley Music Department's Niccola DeLorenzo Composition Prize in the spring of 1963. I had seen the film *Last Year in Marienbad*

by Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet in the spring of 1961. The movie's structure fascinated me. I wanted the musical material to overlap and be shuffled, yet cohere at the end into a single entity – somewhat in the manner of the French film. Another influence was Douglas Leedy's work *pieces* for piano four hands, with its sequence of related fragments. Several improvisation sessions with Leedy and the composer Peter Winkler suggested some of my musical ideas. I also became interested in the music of Morton Feldman around this time.



This piece was written some 25 years after **Pieces for Joan Gallegos** and also deals with fragmentary structures. The harpsichord duo Christine Daxelhofer and Irene Müller-Glasewald – I had met them in the summer of 1987 in Switzerland – requested I write something for their two instruments. I can't say now to what extent I still had the earlier piano work in mind. In any case, I set out to solve the same problem using different material. I intended to write a series of pieces, each one or two pages long, though some material

outgrew this initial idea. The notes and rhythms of the original version are still present in this transcription, but when played on two pianos the work seems completely different in almost every other aspect. In the harpsichord version, the sound of the historical instruments using another musical vocabulary has a surprising effect. Of course, the pianos offer another world of dynamic possibilities; they evoke an altogether different time and place.



for Christine Daxelhofer and Irene Müller-Glasewald

1. John Patrick Thomas

♩ = 100

Harpisichord 1

Harpisichord 2

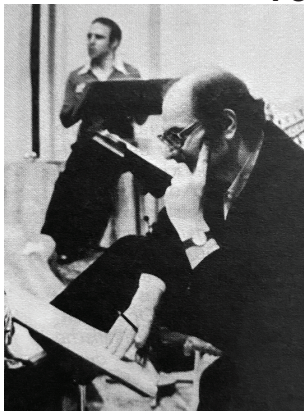
♩ = 100

Attacca

Attacca

Il Lute

First page of the original harpsichord version of Pages.



(2004)

I worked with Mauricio Kagel in the mid-1970s and 1980s and came to have great respect for his work as well as affection for him personally. As the spoken text in the piece indicates, I participated in the premiere of his music theater piece *Mare Nostrum* at the Berlin Festival in 1974. We repeated the work in later years at the opera in Stuttgart, the Avignon Festival, the Festival d'Automne in Paris, and in a different production at the opera houses in Hanover and Lübeck. In 1983, at Kagel's request, I prepared an English version of his original German text for performances at the ICA in London. The translation has been used subsequently in other productions.

Music for Kagel, for harpsichord four hands, was also written for Daxelhofer and Müller-Glasewald. My work with Kagel suggested certain aspects of this piece: the use of spoken words (here, "yes" and "no" in a variety of languages), a certain stylistic extravagance in the music, and a so-called "post-modern" approach to the work as a whole. I hope Kagel would have enjoyed the energy and humor of the piece, though he never saw the score.



Darius Milhaud, his wife Madeleine, and his assistant Charles Jones

Darius and Madeleine Milhaud enjoyed playing piano four hand music throughout their lives. For the centenary of his birth, I wrote this piece to honor his music and express my gratitude for his friendship and his influence as my teacher. When I first joined his

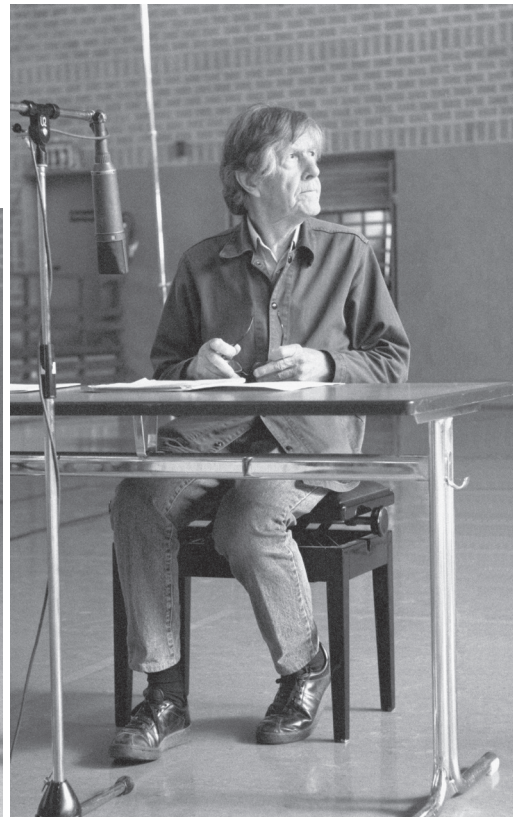
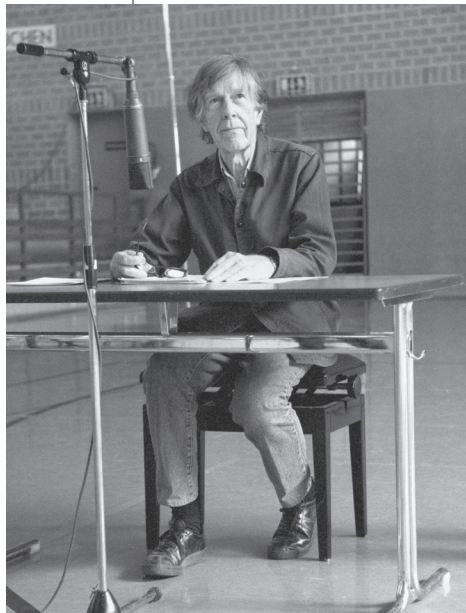
composition class in Aspen, I was a 16-year-old teenager from northwestern Wyoming. Even though I had already had some remarkable musical experiences as a member of the Columbus (later American) Boychoir, being in a room with a historical figure like Milhaud was initially daunting. I needn't have worried, because he turned out to be kind and encouraging. Recognizing that I had a limited grasp of technique, he turned me over to his assistant Charles Jones for studies in harmony and counterpoint, though I was nonetheless permitted to show my work in Milhaud's class with the more mature students. I also participated in Madeleine Milhaud's acting class for the Aspen Music School's opera students, which developed into long years of friendship and affection.

Music for Milhaud has three movements. The first is dedicated to Charles Jones and uses various contrapuntal devices, such as inversions, retrogrades, etc. The second movement is dedicated to Madeleine. It was originally a solo piano piece written in 1974 at the time of Milhaud's death in Geneva. In 1992, I transformed it into a piece for piano four hands. This movement includes a quotation from Milhaud's *Aspen Serenade* – the premiere of which I heard at the Aspen Festival in 1957. The third movement, the longest of the three, uses material derived from Milhaud's famous *Octet* (which consists of two independent string quartets played simultaneously). This final movement, again built out of fragmentary blocks of material, is a set of harmonic variations. There is also a quote from Milhaud's first symphony. I wanted to write something to honor Milhaud's memory that would be completely different from anything I'd written before.

CAGE2

(1992)

When John Cage died in 1992, I wrote two pieces: *Cage 1*, a setting for solo voice of three mesostic texts, and **Cage 2**, which was originally composed for an unspecified instrumentation. I imagined piano four hands, two pianos, or a gamelan ensemble over which the mesostic songs could be superimposed. **Cage 2** is dedicated to the American composer Maryanne Amacher, who introduced me to John Cage at an orchestra rehearsal in Buffalo, New York in the late 1960s. She also introduced me to the "I Ching" (the Chinese Book of Oracles) – which I used in composing **Cage 2**.



BIOGRAPHIES

PASCAL SCHWEREN

Pascal Schveren was born in Cologne in 1969. He studied classical piano at the University of Cologne and jazz piano at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen.

He regularly performs with the Maiburg Ensemble, Le Quatuor Romantique, violinist Eli Georgiewa-Milkov, and the Aalto-Jazztrio, among others.

He lives in Essen-Werden, Germany.

www.pascal-schveren.de



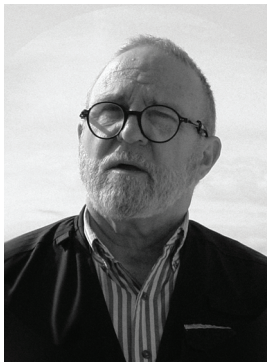
ROGER HOLMES



Roger Holmes was born in Australia. He studied piano in Melbourne with Roy Shepherd. Performances with the Victorian Symphony Orchestra, piano recitals, and radio recordings preceded further study at the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris with Alfred Cortot. Holmes has also participated in master classes with Alfred Brendel, Paul Badura-Skoda, Jörg Demus, Ilona Kabos, and others. In Hamburg since 1972, he is active – apart from solo work – as an organist and accompanist for singers and instrumentalists.

JOHN PATRICK THOMAS

John Patrick Thomas (composer) was born in 1941 in Denver, Colorado, USA. In addition to his studies with Darius Milhaud, he was a student of Andrew Imbrie and Seymour Shifrin at the University of California in Berkeley. Thomas also had a career as a countertenor with a special interest in New Music. He was a founding member of The Five Centuries Ensemble, known for innovative programming that juxtaposed Early Music and works by contemporary composers. A number of CDs document his work. His music is published by the Are Verlag. Thomas lives in Hamburg. www.john-patrickthomas-composer.com



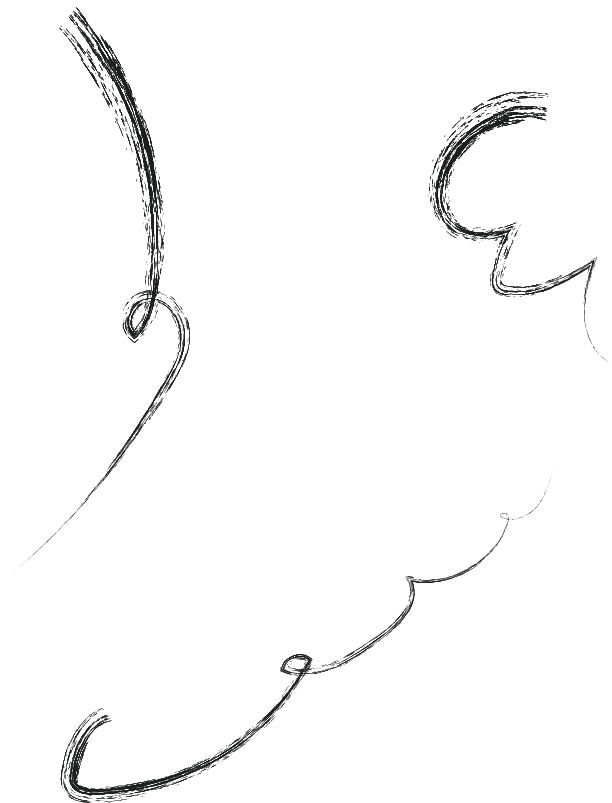
SVEN TREEß



Sven Treeß (recording engineer) was born in Hamburg in 1964 and is active as a sound technician throughout Germany. He is also director of sound design for the Tecklenburg Festival. An important recent project was a series of CDs devoted to the vocal music of Gordon Sherwood with soprano Felicitas Breest. Sven Treeß lives in Hamburg and supervises the recordings of music by John Patrick Thomas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to express our appreciation to Pierre Hellermann and Linnea Rüter at Klangmanufaktur, a piano restoration workshop in Hamburg. They provided a room for our work and two marvelous Steinway D pianos. Their interest and cooperation helped make this recording possible. Studio Yukiko in Berlin has again provided excellent graphic solutions. Our thanks also go to Richard Rieves for his continuing assistance. The two voices saying “yes” and “no” in Music for Kagel are Richard Rieves and the composer. The two pianists speak the other texts.



**JOHN PATRICK
THOMAS**

**MANY FINGERS MANY KEYS
MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS AND PIANO
FOUR HANDS (1963-2011)**

| | | |
|----------|---|---------------|
| 1 | PIECES FOR JOAN GALLEGOS (1963) | 6'17" |
| 2 | PAGES (1988) | 8'49" |
| 3 | MUSIC FOR KAGEL (2004) | 8'18" |
| | MUSIC FOR MILHAUD (1992) | |
| 4 | FOR CHARLES JONES | 2'04" |
| 5 | FOR MADELEINE | 2'10" |
| 6 | IN MEMORY OF DARIUS MILHAUD ON HIS CENTENARY | 9'47" |
| 7 | CAGE 2 (1992) | 8'22" |
| | | 46'07" |

PASCAL SCHWEREN AND ROGER HOLMES, PIANOS

COPYRIGHT 2024
JOHN PATRICK
THOMAS
ALL RIGHTS
RESERVED. GEMA

