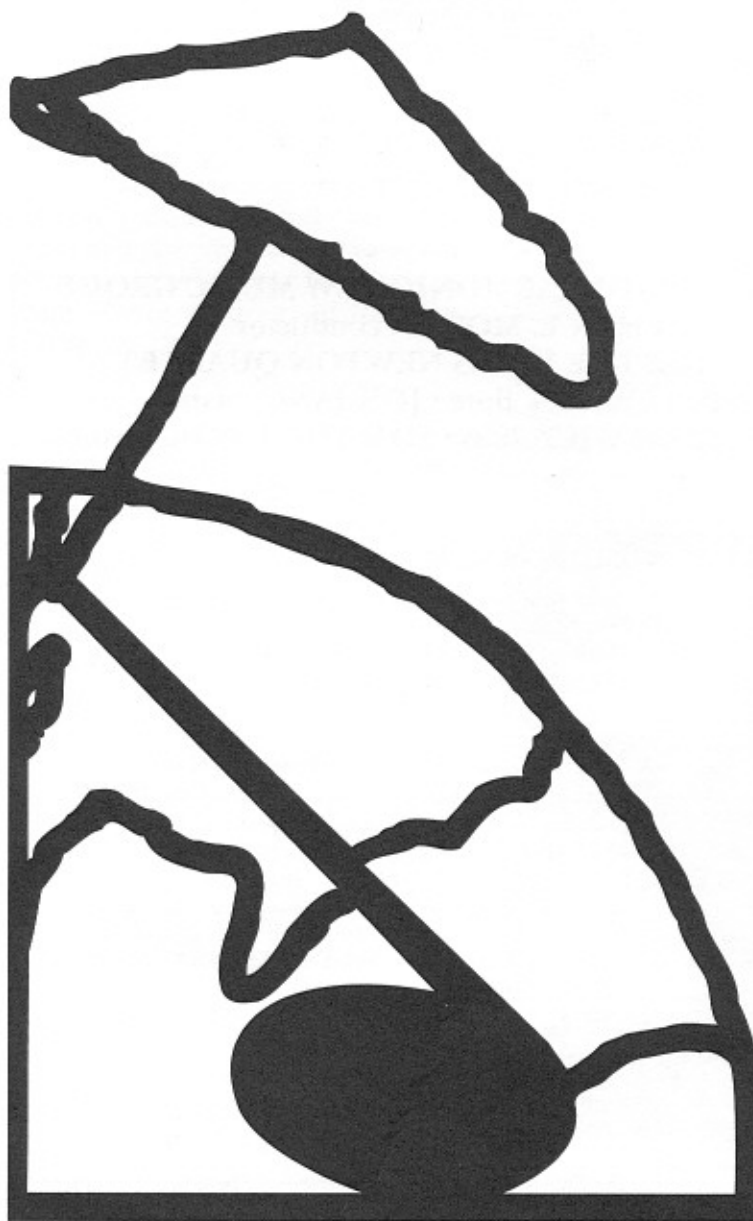


The Green Umbrella



Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group

Monday, April 11, 1994, 8:00

Japan America Theatre

Stephen L. Mosko, conductor

outcome and, ultimately, his indifference to life itself.

My piece of music is an attempt to capture the feeling of the situation described by Beckett and to dramatize in music the relationship between the two characters. As in the Beckett, the music is repetitive and the two contrasting ideas have little on the surface in common. The piece consists of alternating sections of contrasting music with only a few places in the piece where the two ideas occur simultaneously.

The One consists most prominently of a seven-note motive which is played in the winds in various tessituras and speeds, but always in groups of notes with even time values. The One occasionally reaches a kind of saturation point of speed and density, before beginning again on its endless toil.

The Other is played in harmonics by the upper strings. The Other typically begins with a solo motive in even note values, followed by copies of itself, offset in time and played at different speeds. The resulting pattern of cross-rhythms mirrors the Other's obsessive attention to detail.

Both the One and the Other sound over a constant 16th-note pulse in the harp and the marimba. The pitch level of this layer of the piece portrays the sort of short range repetitiveness and long range aimlessness that, I hope, is reminiscent of the Beckett. The piece begins, ends, and is periodically punctuated by a *foirade* of repeated notes in the piano, contrabass, and cellos.

— Charles Dodge

The Line of Immortality

James Newton (b. 1953)

(For a biography of the composer, please see *About the Artists*, p. 5)

Commissioned by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and Meet the Composer, Inc., *The Line of Immortality* was premiered in 1992 by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players under Stephen Mosko. Cast in one



James Newton

movement with numerous subdivisions, the piece is built in both its macro and micro elements around the number seven.

There is a lot of mathematics in the work, which comes out of Newton's study of the expressive numerology of Bartók and Berg. The number seven, the Fibonacci series, and the Golden Section are reflected both vertically and horizontally in the music. Even in the improvisatory sections for the quartet there is a high degree of structure, based on multiples of seven.

Inspired by a dream the composer had, *The Line of Immortality* is about death and letting go of the world, and the journey that the soul takes as it leaves the body and goes to heaven. The seven extramusical themes of the work are: 1) Almighty God; 2) Jesus Christ; 3) John Carter (the composer/clarinetist, who died a short time before the composition was created); 4) Red Callender (the bassist, also deceased — both Carter and Callender performed and recorded with Newton); 5) Olivier Messiaen (a major influence on Newton); 6) the perfection of seven; 7) blues (there are no actual blues quoted in the piece, but the feelings and musical attitudes of blues inflect the work).

Scored for jazz quartet and

chamber orchestra, *The Line of Immortality* contrasts the different styles suggested by those ensembles, but with the same motivic material shared by both groups. As the work unfolds, it slowly brings together these elements, revealing them as just different approaches to the same material. In this, Newton was influenced by *November Steps*, Toru Takemitsu's 1967 work for biwa, shakuhachi, and orchestra.

Newton wanted to create in this piece an environment where both classical and jazz approaches could share the same stage, celebrating their differences yet coexisting fruitfully. Just before the sometimes tumultuous journey finds resolution in a benediction suggesting the feeling of a spiritual, the conductor of the classical ensemble becomes one of the improvisors, cuing for his ensemble sets of material which support the improvisation of the jazz quartet.

The Line of Immortality

An everlasting unfolding
of perfection
by the grace of divine order

How far down will we fall
before God catches us
and gives us
the gift of levitation?

Towards but never to
the celestial city
we can only reach up
to the line of immortality

Only by his grace
can we enter that corridor
lined with gold
where the soul travels
thousands of times the speed
of light.

Through galaxies
until we cross
the tranquil, turquoise waters
of the river Jordan
and enter
the celestial city.

—James Newton