

# Unseen Forces: Electronic Music by Atlanta Composers

Monday, January 28, 2008 8pm • Eyedrum

## PROGRAM NOTES:

### Down the Drain

(2:30)

Mark Gresham

### Straphanger

(6:00)

Adam Scott Neal

### Vibrato Trajectories

(3:27)

Darren Nelsen

### The Bone Season

(7:47)

premiere

Toby Chappell

### Synthphonic Poignancy

(4:50)

Brian Skutle

### A la Feminisca

#### Berio Remix 2

(4:41)

Mitchell Turner

### March to Exile

(3:26)

Jason Passmore

### Voices of the Unseen Forces

(2:52)

Kerwin Young

### Martini

(4:05)

Mike Murray

**DOWN THE DRAIN** is one of two recent works which take as inspiration our current local water shortage. (The other is "Song of the Chattahoochee," based upon poetry of Sidney Lanier, written for mezzo-soprano Maya Hoover and pianist Lisa Leong.) Only three kinds of recorded sounds are involved in "Down the Drain": 1) actual sounds of water running down drains, 2) the spoken word "water," and 3) a tap on a Pyrex measuring cup with a teaspoon. All source sounds are manipulated only with Audacity software. The method of composition has roots in the "musique concrète" movement pioneered by Pierre Schaeffer in the late 1940s and '50s, although modern sampling technology and digital manipulation are now used in place of magnetic tape.

**STRAPHANGER** is based entirely upon the sounds of Atlanta's MARTA rail system. The title is a slang term for a subway commuter, and the piece depicts a musical daydream, beginning with clear samples of the subway before drifting elsewhere. Once the car's doors close, the mind begins to wander through metallic scrapings sounds, ethereal bubbling clouds, and dissonant voices before being jolted awake by the clattering sounds of the tracks. Soon the mind wanders again and the tracks become explosions and the explosions become distant organ arpeggios. This piece makes extensive use of granular synthesis, algorithmic generation, subtractive synthesis, and time-stretching.

**VIBRATO TRAJECTORIES** sets in motion four drones that vibrate and pan at different speeds within the stereo spectrum, intersecting and playing against one another. The piece was written in Csound.

**THE BONE SEASON** (2007) (premiere) Drawn to a dark Presence in the woods, I discover with horror that the pull of the mysterious is leading me to my doom. The setting is an arcane, primitive ritual intended to draw down forces not of this earth, a Lovecraftian homage to the Elder Gods of the crawling chaos. I am the last, I will tell the audient void....

**SYNTHPHONIC POIGNANCY** Composed in 1999, "Synthphonic Poignancy" is a canon built around a theme derived from

a small, four-note motif heard in an episode of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer." Written by long-time series composer Christophe Beck, the motif is little more than a minor piece of underscore, but it resonated with me and inspired the following composition, which I look at as a work more interested in texture and mood than musical technique, a trait it shares with many pieces of mine. Available on the CD "Creative Beginnings."

**A LA FEMINISCA BERIO REMIX 2 (2006)** is a remix of the Sicilian song from Berio's Folk Songs. The sounds were taken from the 1968 recording featuring Cathy Berberian. The stark edges of each sample calls attention its collage nature, emphasizing the remix quality.

**MARCH TO EXILE** was composed in Logic 7.1. This is an electro-acoustic piece that depicts the time frame the Israelites spent in captivity in Babylon from their final defeat to arrival.

**VOICES OF THE UNSEEN FORCES**, composed in 1999, was included on a live acoustic album I recorded entitled "Miles Away." It is a quintet setting, but the sound is big. This particular work speaks of the chaotic interaction that naturally occurs within nature; those chemical reactions which produce life. In particular, plant life is the subject matter. The buzzing of the bees and dragonflies assisting in the pollination process. We visualize the result of this process once it has shown itself. We also recognize the sounds/voices of the insects during the spring and summer months. But, what we don't see are the underlying elements of it all, the supernatural; the fixed chemical make-up of those particles which bond together to create plant life. These *Voices of the Unseen Forces* are speaking to us all, wanting us to comprehend what exactly is taking place. We must listen, and in listening there will be some great revelation of profound wisdom.

**MARTINI** is from Murray's newly released CD "Skyline." The piece is dedicated to a very dear friend who likes dry, white martinis with 4 olives. The song (and the CD) was written entirely in Logic for the Mac.

**Toby Chappell** has been a guitarist and composer for nearly twenty years. Since 1998, he has recorded and released more than a dozen CDs in a variety of metal, ambient, and electronic/experimental solo and band projects. His current compositional interests are modern classical guitar music, aleatoric and algorithmic techniques, and what his wife refers to as “demented circus music.”

**Mark Gresham** is a native of Atlanta. As a composer, he is primarily known for his choral and instrumental works, most recently gaining attention from percussionists world-wide for his extensive, continuing “Vagabond Drumming” project. He is also an award-winning music journalist, and is a contributing writer for *Creative Loafing* and *NewMusicBox* as well as other publications.

**Mike Murray** began his musical journey in his home town of Montclair, New Jersey in the early 70’s when he joined a small street band as a drummer. Now, a relative newcomer to music composition, Mike draws his influence from many different old school artist legends such as George Duke/St Stanley Clarke, Jimi Hendrix, Sly and the Family Stone, Earth Wind and Fire, Mandrill, Carlos Santana and Larry Graham to name a few. Mike’s musical style blends his favorite 70’s style R&B and Afro-Latin influences together with the sounds of today’s Smooth Jazz and a twist of ambient styles. Mike released his first CD, “Skyline” in 2007 - a true testament to his unique compositional talents. Mike is currently working on his next CD project - a second set of smooth and mildly urbanized grooves with piano and acoustic guitar at the core.

**Adam Scott Neal** (b. 1981) is an American composer living in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He holds a BM in music technology and an MM in music composition from Georgia State

University, where he studied with Robert Scott Thompson. Currently, Neal is pursuing an MA in Sonic Arts from Queen’s University of Belfast. Neal’s music has been performed by such artists as the New York New Music Ensemble and the neoPhonia New Music Ensemble, and has been featured at such international festivals as June in Buffalo and the Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival.

**Darren Nelsen** is a composer and guitarist located in Roswell, GA. He writes classical, electronic, and fusion music. His work has been commissioned by the Iolani School in Hawaii and performed by the New York Miniaturist Ensemble. Darren founded the Atlanta Composers Blog and the Atlanta Composers Meetup. His website is [www.curiomusic.com](http://www.curiomusic.com)

**Jason Passmore** (b.1974) is an Atlanta based composer and performer that specializes in jazz, acoustic and electro-acoustic music. As a composer/arranger, Jason has written or arranged music for various jazz groups and bands. The styles range from jazz to pop, salsa (Latin) and new age. As a performer, Jason has played in various ensembles and groups in Atlanta and around the country. He has shared the stage or recorded with many local, national and international artists.

**Brian Skutle**’s passion is for storytelling, be it through music, film, or creative writing, with the story dictating the medium that best brings it to life. In his music though, it may not be a specific story that inspires him but a feeling. A sense of longing. Of mystery. Of tension. Of serenity. Of sensuality. Of something beyond the humdrum normalcy of life, though sometimes his goal is to just compose for the fun of creating. Inspired by storytellers of all forms, select examples of Brian’s personal expressions, and several of his film reviews and commentaries, are found at [www.sonic-cinema.com](http://www.sonic-cinema.com)

**Mitchell Turner** (b. 1966) holds a Ph.D. (1999) and an M.M (1993) from the University of Georgia, where he studied music theory and composition, as well as a B.S. in Communications from Georgia Southern University (1988). He is currently an Associate Professor of Music at LaGrange College. His music has been performed at the Sonorities Festival 2007 (in Belfast) conferences of SEAMUS, the College Music Society and Southeastern Composers League. His music is published by Wehr’s Music House and Connors Publications. His music software HostX, TseqAM, and TseqX has been published multiple times by the British Magazine Computer Music. HostX is also distributed by Behringer, GmbH, with their digital audio hardware.

**Kerwin Young** is a self-taught composer, record producer, recording artist and multi-instrumentalist. He considers himself a *geometric khemist*, one who manipulates mensural frequencies. His works are beyond any particular category; ranging from Bach to rock. Kerwin composes for symphonic orchestra, wind orchestra, chamber and jazz ensembles, television, film, and other interactive media. He has produced and/or collaborated with such artists as Public Enemy, Bobby Brown, 3K Static, Busta Rhymes, The James Brown Band, Roy Haynes, Bootsy Collins, George Clinton, Ice Cube, Kenny Gamble & Leon Huff, Tevin Campbell, Nick Martinelli, and the list goes on. In the film and television realm, Kerwin has composed and produced original works for *Sister Act 2*, *Street Fighter*, *He Got Game*, *New York Undercover*, *Girl Friends*, and the theme song to the hit reality show, *Flavor Of Love*.

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For information on composers and events please visit [www.atlantacomposers.com](http://www.atlantacomposers.com)