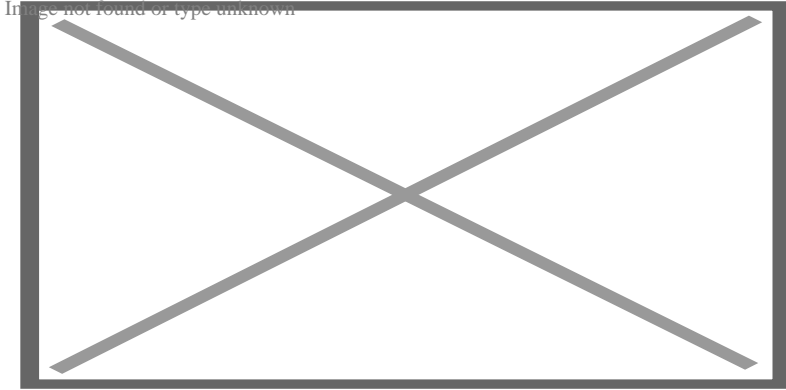


# Other Minds Festival: OM 15: Panel Discussion & Concert 3, 3 of 5



## Identifier

OMF.2010.03.06.c1.C

## Description

The third night of the 15th Other Minds Festival of New Music (OM 15) began with a panel discussion with the composers whose works were to be featured in that night's concert, which was held on March 6, 2010. Joining moderator Charles Amirkhanian on stage were, Gyan Riley, who is known for his guitar playing as well as composing, minimalist composer Tom Johnson, and violinist, composer, and indy rock personality Carla Kihlstedt. Johnson describes his fascination with minimal music, which for him means works with a limited number of notes, a single main idea, and often a mathematically based progression. Unlike the elegant simplicity of Johnson, Kihlstedt describes her composing style as "messy," typically starting with a wide variety of ideas that are examined, aligned, and developed in a manner that she describes as "organic." Riley discusses his recent forays into the realm of composition and the advantages of working with musicians who are as comfortable performing contemporary classical music as playing in an avant-garde rock group. All three of the panelists also comment on their experience of participating in the pre-concert retreat at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program.

## When Heron Sings Blue

I lived in Arcata, CA for about a year in 2005-06. It's a beautiful little coastal town in the North end of the state. My apartment was only a few blocks from the Arcata Marsh, which is a wildlife sanctuary featuring a plethora of incredible birds. That was a particularly difficult and depressed time for me in general, and I didn't have much of a social life. I developed a habit of taking evening walks in the marsh, toting beers in my pockets and observing the fauna. I got to know one individual in particular, a great blue heron whom I dubbed "Big Daddy." He appeared to be in more or less the same spot every day. I passed many an evening sipping ales and hanging out with my newfound winged friend. Always solitary, he seemed completely at peace and indifferent to his fellow denizens. He urged me to find a solace in music, composing in particular. So I dedicate this piece to Big Daddy, and also to my wonderful fiancée Nicole, whom I met toward the end of my stay in Arcata. It turned out that she was an ornithologist and shared my passion for ambling about the marsh... and beer. -- Gyan Riley

## Combinations

The music is constructed by systematically taking all the combinations of something, but each movement does this in a quite different way. There are 24 permutations of A, B, C, D, and these can be divided into six groups of four in such a way that all four notes are present at each moment. The first movement has to do with finding all these combinations and putting them together so that the listener can hear four-part canons and repeated chords at the same time. [The second movement] assigns a different E-Flat to each of the four instruments. Using this collection of notes we can hear E-

Flat for a solo instrument in four ways, for two instruments in six ways, for three instruments in four ways and for all four instruments in a single way....[In the third movement] each instrument has three notes, which can be played consecutively, or with one rest between notes, or with two rests between notes, or with three...Seven combinations in all...[In the fourth movement] each instrument has two motifs, which can only play one at a time [for a] total of 80 possible combinations...[In the final movement] I wanted to investigate chords that could be formed by grouping the 12 notes into...symmetrical parts...but determining how best to voice the four notes for the four instruments at each moment required a surprising amount of old-fashioned composing...It is sometimes amazing how much effort is required in order to make the music sound effortless, as if it had been quickly deduced from a simple formula. -- Tom Johnson

## Eggs and Baskets

“Eggs and Baskets” was written in 1987 for the musicians of the Catskill Conservatory, where it was presented in grade schools. The children liked it a lot but we found out later that the piece is perhaps more appreciated by adults. -- Tom Johnson

## Pandæmonium

“Pandæmonium” is based on nine texts from a book of the same name by Humphrey Jennings. This book is a collection of writings that document “the coming of the machine as seen by contemporary observers” between 1660 and 1886. This compilation of personal accounts from journals, newspapers, and letters between friends creates a wonderfully multifaceted portrait of a fast-changing society...Each text is so colorful and so personal that it seemed to me a natural backbone for a musical piece. My goal was to create a distinct setting for each of the nine texts that capitalized on the unique language that ROVA has developed in their thirty years of playing music together. Just as the book is pointillistic in its approach, I allowed each text to direct my process in its own way. Some movements are written with traditional musical notation, and some are sewn graphic scores, it seemed only appropriate to sew the graphic elements of the score, given how dramatically altered the textile industry was by the Industrial Revolution...Part musical suite, part radio drama, and part historical collage, “Pandæmonium” is the culmination of a multifaceted process that was as unpredictable for me as the history on which it is based. -- Carla Kihlstedt

Notes: “When Heron Sings Blue” was commissioned by Other Minds with support from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, and through the ACF-SFBAC as part of the Northern California Composers Commissioning Program. Quatuor Bozzini is presented with the support of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. “Pandæmonium” was commissioned by Other Minds in partnership with Rova:Arts, with support from the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation Emerging Composers 2007 Initiative.

### Musical Selections

Combinations, for string quartet (2003) (26:27) / Tom Johnson

**Artists**

Other Minds Festival (features)

Quatuor Bozzini (features)

Johnson, Tom, 1939- (features)

Merkel, Clemens, 1968- (features)

McIntosh, Andrew Nathaniel (features)

Bozzini, Stéphanie (features)

Bozzini, Isabelle (features)