Molly Alicia Barth, Flutes
Michael J. Maccaferri, Clarinets
Matt Albert, Violin
Nicholas Photinos, Cello
Lisa Kaplan, Piano

The Yellow Pages (1985)  
MICHAEL TORKE  
(b. 1961)

Bearbeitungen über das Glogauer Liederbuch (1962)  
CHARLES WUORINEN  
(b. 1938)

Vox Balaenae (1971)  
GEORGE CRUMB  
(b. 1929)

Petroushskates (1983)  
JOAN TOWER  
(b. 1938)

arr. Allen Otte

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Michael Torke: The Yellow Pages (1985)

Michael Torke was born in Milwaukee in 1961 and studied at the Eastman School of Music and Yale University. His principal teachers include Joseph Schwantner, Christopher Rouse, and Jacob Druckman. His music has been defined as post-minimalist, incorporating repetitive structures with musical techniques from classical and popular idioms. The Yellow Pages now serve as the first movement, together with The Blue Pages and The White Pages (both written in 1995), of The Telephone Book. About The Yellow Pages, Torke writes:

The Yellow Pages was composed while I was a student at Yale, in the spring of 1985. I had just finished my first large piece, Ecstatic Orange, and I chose more open, diatonic harmonies as a kind of relief from the denser chords I had just used. My decision to write for two winds, two strings, and piano came from the belief that it would be a practical combination, and that I would be more likely to get performances in the future. Referring to the alphabetical listings found in [this] familiar directories, I devised a kind of musical equivalency: bars of music repeat, but I continually introduce new key signatures. The result (going through the complete cycle of fifths, but not transposing anything) is the feeling of much activity over gradual change, much like the way alphabetical order works. (It takes 133 pages of "A" entries to get to the "B’s" in my phone book, yet the ending letters of all the entries change constantly).

Charles Wuorinen: Bearbeitungen über das Glogauer Liederbuch (1962)

Charles Wuorinen, born in 1938, is the youngest composer to receive the Pulitzer Prize in music (1970). With more than 200 compositions to date for many of the world’s leading orchestras, ensembles and soloists, he is among the most prolific composers in American history. Currently Professor of Composition at Rutgers University, he has served on the faculties of Columbia, Princeton, and Yale Universities, the University of Iowa, University of California (San Diego), Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory and the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is the author of Simple Composition, used by composition students throughout the world and recently translated into Chinese. In 1962 he co-founded The Group for Contemporary Music, one of America's most prestigious ensembles dedicated to performance of new chamber music. In addition to cultivating a new generation of performers, commissioning and premiering hundreds of new works, the Group has been a model for many similar organizations which have appeared in the United States since its founding. About his work, the composer writes:

Around 1475, the canon of the Glogauer Cathedral had copied for himself a collection of chansons, sacred works and instrumental pieces from a largely anonymous repertory dating mainly from the 1460s and 1470s. The collection primarily consists of vocal works, but some are clearly intended for instrumental use, and it is mainly upon these that I have drawn for the settings in the Bearbeitungen. In 1962, I was greatly taken with many kinds of 15th-century music, and in the pieces I chose to instrumentate – or “recompose” – what particularly attracted me was the rapidity with which the intervallic environment changed from moment to moment,
almost every new note kaleidoscopically creating a functionally “new” harmony. This characteristic of so much 15th-century counterpoint contrasts sharply with what came later. Here we have not yet arrived at the larger overarching sense of harmonic hierarchy that even in the music of the Josquin generation already tends to organize, subsume, and span smaller details of pitch behavior into larger, broader units of continuity. Yet unlike earlier music, this 15th-century repertory treats note-to-note harmonic relations with great care, respecting consonance and dissonance, often with the effect of obscuring the significance of more fundamentally cadential parts of a passage. Paradoxically – for my own concerns were already in that larger spanning which can be heard in the String Trio – I was attracted by the very characteristic I have been describing in these pieces; their angular melodic behavior charmed me and beckoned me toward timbral composing with the notes that the works already provided. I chose six pieces (some of whose titles are whimsical and some identificatory) and set them for four instruments (really six since the flute and clarinet double piccolo and bass clarinet, respectively). The originals are all three-part works, and the challenge in making these settings lay in trying to project a wide timbral variety with but one more instrument than there are really polyphonic voices. To this end, I have employed doublings, octave transfers, and many kinds of articulation; it never happens that a single instrument is identified with a single contrapuntal part for and length of time.

George Crumb: Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale) (1971)

Born in 1929, George Crumb is one of the most famous composers of our time. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 1968 Pulitzer Prize in Music. He taught at Hollins College, the University of Colorado at Boulder, SUNY Buffalo and for 32 years at the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, retiring from teaching in 1997. His teachers included Eugene Weigler, Boris Blacher, and Ross Lee Finney. The composer writes:

Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale), composed in 1971, is scored for flute, cello and piano (all amplified in concert performance). The work was inspired by the singing of the humpback whale, a tape recording of which I had heard two or three years previously. Each of the three performers is required to wear a black half-mask (or visor-mask). The masks, by effacing the sense of human projection, are intended to represent, symbolically, the powerful impersonal forces of nature (i.e. nature dehumanized). I have also suggested that the work be performed under deep-blue stage lighting. The form of Voice of the Whale is a simple three-part design, consisting of a prologue, a set of variations named after the geological eras, and an epilogue.


Pulitzer prize-winning composer John Harbison, born in 1938, is currently professor of composition at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has also taught at CalArts and Boston University. He has been composer-in-residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Tanglewood, Marlboro, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals, and the American Academy in Rome. His music has been performed by many of the world's leading orchestras, ensembles, and soloists, and has been recorded numerous labels. As conductor, Harbison has led a number of leading orchestras and chamber groups, including the Los Angeles
Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, in music from Monteverdi to the present. About his work, Variations, the composer writes:

Variations (1982) was commissioned by Frank Taplin and written for Rose Mary Harbison, David Satz and Ursula Oppens, who gave the first performances at the Santa Fe Chamber Festival. The first inspiration for the piece was a statue of the Caananite fertility goddess dancing. I began a dance set: Spirit Dance, Body Dance, Soul Dance, and Dervish-Finale. It then turned into a set of variations with the same four sections. The first three sections consist of five variations each and the last section is a fugal chase leading to an epilogue. The theme is presented in canon, against itself, in Variation I. There are five more canons later on, each at a different time interval. The listener will perceive a clear harmonic outline, which gains in flexibility as the piece continues. The Variations have been often performed and prove elusive and challenging. Their classical surface has sometimes lured both performers and listeners into believing they are on firm ground.

JOAN TOWER: Petroushkates (1983)

Born in 1938, Joan Tower is at the forefront of today's contemporary music scene. In addition to commissions from nearly every major orchestra in the United States and several around the world, she has received grants from the Guggenheim and Koussevitsky Foundations, among others. She was a founding member of the Da Capo Chamber Players, winners of the 1972 Naumburg Award, with whom she played piano. She is currently the Asher Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972.

Petroushkates, one of Tower's most popular works, was written for the tenth anniversary of the Da Capo Chamber Players. An homage to Stravinsky, one of the greatest influences on Tower's musical thought, the piece quotes the rhythms and color of the opening of Stravinsky's Petroushka as well as finds inspiration from the flow and grace of figure skating. However, this work is not a pastiche of Stravinsky, but a musical tribute in the form of a memoir with only a few passing references to his works: the opening hurly burly of Petroushka, a violin solo passage from L'Histoire du Soldat, and a fleeting suggestion of the chord spacings of Rite of Spring. But in all aspects this is an original work, freshly conceived and executed. The "borrowing" of Stravinsky is used in the same way he himself "borrows" from other composers, resulting in an entirely different musical atmosphere and composition. Also, like Stravinsky's music, this work is balletic, for it is inspired by the movements of the body in motion.

-Notes by Nicholas Photinos