

**A Concert  
of  
Electronic Works**

**by  
Lawrence Fritts**

**Clapp Recital Hall  
8:00 pm  
November 14, 1994**

# **The Program**

**I. Sirens (1981)**

**II. Variations (1983)**

**III. Male Lingua (1983)**

**IV. Metra (1986)**

**V. Green Run (1993)**

**Nyet, Nyet, Natashe (1984)**

**Music in State (1980)**

**Masque Électrique (1981)**

**VI. Omelas (1981)**

**VII. Tetraktys (1992)**

## Program Notes

**Sirens** began as an experiment in which I recorded radio static and processed it with a digital delay. Out of this processed white noise emerged faint-sounding background pitches, the frequencies of which were the inverse of the delay time. The presence of these pitches immediately suggested to me the sound of sirens calling in a sea storm, the illusion of which I tried to create through filtering and over-dubbing on tape.

**Variations** was commissioned in 1983 by the artist D.V. Lyons for her installation, "Baby Grand." The clearly articulated sounds--in black and white, so to speak--were produced on a Casio digital synthesizer and over-dubbed on tape. The rhythmic structure of this twelve-tone work was both serially and algorithmically determined.

**Male Lingua**, or "Evil Tongue," begins with concrète manipulations of a female voice which over the course of the work expands to create a world of unknown languages--the actual sources of which were the vocalizations of various persons, including Carroll O'Connor (as Archie Bunker), Yoko Ono, Ella Fitzgerald, Ted Kennedy (with heckler), the composer Tomas Svoboda, an Irish priest, and a southern preacher.

**Metra** begins with a loud clang-like sonority which decomposes first into a 12-note chromatic chord and then into single 3-note chord. As the piece progresses, this trichord is transformed and combined to create larger pitch structures which serve to delineate individual layers of musical activity. Eventually, these pitch structures begin evolving into the same structure, a process which unites the individual layers of the work and reverses the process of decomposition. After a cadence announces the unification of the work's material, another clang-like sound appears and the decomposition-composition premise is reiterated in a short coda. The work was composed in the University of Chicago Computer Music Studio on a computer-controlled Buchla analog synthesizer in 1986.

**Green Run** is part of a larger work-in-progress named for a Cold War atomic experiment. This section is composed of ascending glissandi inharmonic, metallic timbres generated by sixteen Yamaha digital synthesizers. **Nyet, Nyet Natasha** is a concrète work whose primary source material was a Russian language record. **Music in State** is based on gestures produced on a Moog synthesizer which grow out of an underlying drone and slowly pulsing octaves. **Masque Électrique** features Moog and concrète sounds in a mock court dance which quickly spins out of control.

**Omelas** was commissioned for a 1981 multi-media production of Ursula LeGuin's short story, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." In the scene for which the music was written, a young woman under the influence of "Drooz" (the drug of choice in the Utopian Omelas), was to climb up on a table and dance, babble, and otherwise carry on under flashing strobe lights. Having begun my career as a rock musician in the late 60s, I was quite familiar with the format. Inspired by this, along with LeGuin's description of Omelasian music as being "farther and nearer and everchanging," I tried to create a trippy wash of sounds which seemed to come and go at will without joining together or leading anywhere--much like those interminable space jams of my misspent youth.

**Tetraktys** is an electronic concerto for synthesized vibraphone and orchestra, the sounds of which were generated entirely by FM synthesis. The work may be subdivided in several ways: the deployment of two tuning systems (based on a 15-note scale in the first half of the piece and a 20-note scale in the second half) suggests a two-part structure; the vibraphone-orchestra-vibraphone arrangement of performing forces implies a three-part arch form; and background voice-leading sketches a four-part registral structure. The ratios of these subdivisions to each other and the whole is described by an ancient quasi-religious Greek symbol known as the Tetraktys of the Decad. Considered sacred by Pythagoras and his followers, the Tetraktys embodied their belief that music, mathematics, and the universe are one.

**Lawrence Fritts** studied with Shulamit Ran, John Eaton, and Ralph Shapey at the University of Chicago where he is completing his PhD in composition. His music has been performed in Chicago by the Contemporary Chamber Players, the University of Chicago New Music Ensemble, New Music DePaul, and New Music Chicago. His electronic works have been featured in a series of concerts at Columbia College and have been broadcast in the US and Europe. Metra was a US finalist in the 1987 ISCM World Music Days competition and was featured on Italian National Radio later that year. Mr. Fritts was interviewed recently on CBC and NPR about the history of electronic music and in January he presented a paper to the Annual Meeting of the American Mathematical Society on the mathematical structure of musical transformations in the music of Milton Babbitt. He teaches electronic music at DePaul University and is currently Visiting Assistant Professor in Composition and Theory at the University of Iowa.