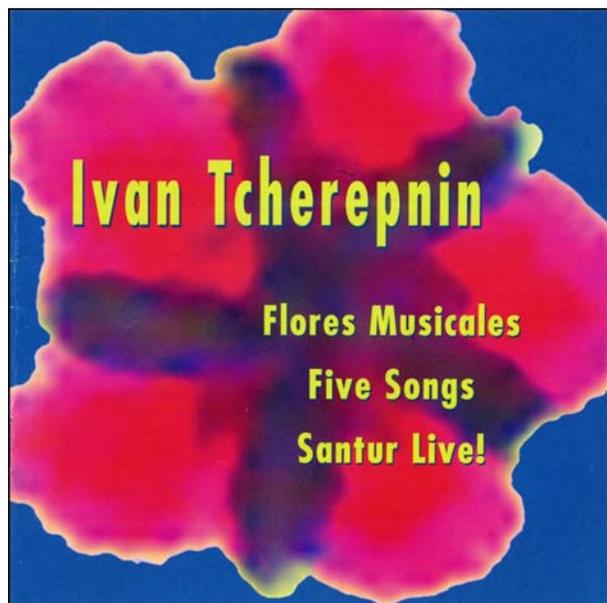


Ivan Tcherepnin

Flores Musicales / Five Songs / Santūr Live!



Flores musicales (1980) (24:36)

1. Overture: P'tite P'tite (3:07)
2. The Ghost Violin (7:58)
3. Grand Fire Music (4:28)
4. High in the Woods (4:38)

5. Concatenations (4:25)
Peggy Pearson, oboe; Wilma Smith, violin; Ivan Tcherepnin, psaltery, organ, and electronic processor.

Five Songs (1979) (24:00)

6. Do-Mi (10:02)
7. Après le Do-Mi (2:49)
8. Pfft! (1:54)
9. Queues (3:19)
10. After the Queues (Tales) (5:56)
Marion Dry, contralto; Jean-Pierre Dautricourt, flute; Ivan Tcherepnin, electronic processor.

Santūr Live! (1977–present) (27:24)

Scenes from *Santūr Opera*

11. Overture: The Situation in the Land (3:58)
12. Tentatives II (2:09)
13. The Call of the Lunar Feline (2:26)
14. Night Idyll (6:47)
15. Dream Filterings I (1:32)
16. Dream Filterings II (1:22)
17. The Army and the Chase (3:29)
18. Herald of Good Tidings (3:21)
Ivan Tcherepnin, serge modulator electronics and santūr.

Total playing time: 76:00

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Notes

Flores musicales calls for oboe, psaltery, and violin, all of whose sounds are processed and transformed (sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes radically) by a veritable armada of electronic modules. The work received its first performance on November 29, 1979, at Boston University.

The outer movements, *P'tite P'tite* and *Concatenations*, are both canonic. In the first movement (inspired by the *Gran Partita* of Mozart), the chromatic, cascading melodies are passed through a delay circuit that creates an electronic double of each instrumental line—the result is a giddy kind of perpetual motion machine. The continuous motion of this overture is put into relief by the quiet stasis of *The Ghost Violin*. This passage of meditative and disembodied lyricism uses a pitch-tracking circuit to evoke a feeling of empty space and dream-like gesturing; the maze of sonic imagery that is created leads into *Grand Fire Music*. In this third movement, the oboe and violin play simple, unabashedly tuneful phrases in counterpoint, accompanied by the rich, golden drone of the “teraphonic organ.” Following the conclusion of *Grand Fire Music*, there is a brief improvisational section (the only one of its kind in this otherwise totally notated piece), *High in the Woods*, characterized by short, bird-like figurations that have a kind of spectral luminescence about them (a result of electronic processing). The finale, *Concatenations*, begins as a sober little canon for oboe and violin, but quickly evolves into fantastical sound images, a sort of musical Hieronymus Bosch painting, with a “scene by the brook” and a Gothic

coda, full of wobbly chords and sliding pitches, that seems like a virtual bestiary of sonic creatures.

—Adapted from notes by John Adams

Five Songs was commissioned by WFMT-FM in Chicago as part of a project focusing on the twentieth-century art song, initiated by author/critic Karen Monson. The premiere took place in March of 1979, on WFMT, with Marion Dry as soloist. A review of the work in *Chicago Magazine* noted that “The songs’ format and texts explore the border zone between sense and nonsense, truth and deception, comedy and tragedy ... the area between categories, where life mostly takes place.”

If one were to look for a theme in the cycle, it would be the very same theme as that of most songs since the dawn of music: Love (promised, betrayed, mischievous, chivalrous, yearned for, scorned, divine, profane, etc.). Musically, each piece is characterized by a distinctive use of voice and electronic “instrumentation.” Through the use of electronics, the voice becomes its own accompaniment, abetted by the flute, which acts as the voice’s alter ego. The distinction between voice and accompaniment, and between text and music, breaks down during the course of the piece.

The solfège syllables that are presented at the beginning of the songs gradually begin to resemble familiar words, to the point where they “take off,” forming verselets—ditties that float on the surface of nonsense. In the end, the bubbles burst and “do-mi” returns, but the syllable no longer correspond to the

pitches with which they were previously associated. As if there had not been a surfeit of “do-mi’s” already, the second song “Après le Do-Mi” begins with “do-mi” all over again, but does not linger there; it creates instead a cut-and-dried commentary on the first song.

“Pffft!” (not to be confused with the French beverage, Pschtt!) is like a scherzo. The voice and flute produce a constant stream of raw materials that give the electronic apparatus a chance to flex their muscles. Stefan Tcherepnin (*b* 1977) furnished much of the text for this song.

The fourth song, “Queues,” returns to the formed words. The text begins with a list of different names for the same star, and moves on to include names of several imaginary plants (from Edward Lear’s *Nonsense Botany*), names for cosmic processes (coined by G. Gurdjieff), Latin quotations from Jarry’s *Le Surmale*, more imaginary plant names, and works coined in 1943: “hubba-hubba, bazooka, chin turret, G.I. Joe, etc.” (from Kenneth Versand’s *Polyglot’s Lexicon*). All of this material culminates in a quote from the sufi master Ibn Arabi (*b* 1032) that attempts, as Lao-Tzu had done a millennium and a half before, to describe the indescribable: “The Tao which can be known is not the Tao.” Throughout the piece, the text undergoes time-delayed electronic processing so that, in effect, the words watch different forms of themselves emerge instantaneously. Lear’s drawings of the imaginary plants are incorporated into the score as a type of *musica ficta*.

“After the Queues (Tales)” draws on case histories from the classic turn-of-the-century medico-forensic text *Psychopathia Sexualis*, by Krafft-Ebing. In between, there are more references to Jarry (“Encore ardente!”) and to Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (“HCE: LUSTSLEUTH?”). The piece comes to a close with the text of a medieval song whose tale, which has been retold by Hermann Hesse, rings a timeless truth: “*Plaisir d’amour dure qu’un instant, chagrin d’amour dure toute la vie.*” And music remains after all else is forgotten.

—Ivan Tcherepnin

Santūr Live!

Scenes from *Santūr Opera*

Santūr Live! is a collection of eight scenes from Ivan Tcherepnin’s *Santūr Opera*, as performed in eight different venues on two continents over a period of seventeen years. This spatial and temporal breadth is appropriate for an opera without singers or libretto, an opera that is staged only in the mind of the listener. *Santūr Opera* uses only one instrument, which is modified electronically in a variety of ways, and only one tuning, a nine-step scale created by the composer. Yet each scene has its own unique permutation of acoustic and electronic sound, each scene uses different modes (*viz*, moods) drawn from the common scale, and each, within its own structural and motivic boundaries, is improvised anew at every performance. The weaver and loom of this sonic tapestry are, respectively composer/performer Tcherepnin and his 80-stringed diva, the Persian santūr.

The genesis of *Santūr Opera* was the santūr itself, a Persian hammered dulcimer presented to Tcherepnin in 1972 by a visiting Iranian student. Tcherepnin, a pianist, confesses, “I have always loved to play things with hammers.” He sees the santūr as an instrument analogous to the piano. The timbres of both are produced by hammers striking strings, and both are innately orchestral. “Each scale degree of the santūr sounds on four free-vibrating strings,” he explains, “and the resultant tone has a glowing, evolving quality—which lends itself well to electronic processing such as filtering, phasing, digital delay, gating, and various types of modulation.”

Having conceived the opera as a solo work, Tcherepnin had to figure out a way to simultaneously play the santūr and control

the electronics. The logical conclusion was to have the strike of the hammer send the signal. Working with the Serge synthesizer, created by his brother Serge Tcherepnin, and an analog delay designed by David Wilson, Tcherepnin developed the means to manipulate the santūr’s sound through the manner of play. During a performance of the opera, the electronics respond directly to the way the string or body of the instrument is struck. “For example,” says Tcherepnin, “a hand attack might result in a fast electronic pulsation applied to the sound, which slows as the sound fades.” A separate control patch was developed for each scene of the opera. Each would have its own timbral language, showing the tremendous range of the source instrument and its electronic “mate.”

The story told in *Santūr Opera* mirrors the conundrum of its instrumentation and performance. It is at once ancient and modern, archetypal and eccentric, figurative and literal, dead-serious and tongue-in-cheek.

The events take place in a land as distant in space as in time. Unrest and uncertainty are rampant, yet the populace is convinced that all is normal. Enter the Hero: a holy fool, who naively perceives that everything is upside-down (*The Situation in the Land*). He believes that through the purity of his love he will be able to prevail over the disorder (*Tentative Attempts to Set Things Right*), but he is derailed by the intervention of the seducing feminine.

She tempts his love from its pinnacle of un-lived idealism and catches him in a samsaric web of relationship (*The Call of the Lunar Feline*). The hero’s focus becomes confused, flooding the land and its people with longing through his impure incarnation of disembodied love (*Night Idyll*, *Dream Filterings 1*, *Dream Filterings 2*).

Morning comes and normal life resumes at the Marrakesh Market. But the unleashing of love the previous night has given the Authorities the perfect excuse to incriminate the hero and his beloved, on grounds of immorality. Planning to eliminate them and the threat they pose to the (upside-down) order of things, the Army pursues the paramours relentlessly over the entire planet. Word spreads that the lovers have been caught and killed (*The Army and the Chase*). But order is far from restored. All the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that the lovers had contained are let loose, and the land is swept into a wild bacchanalia in which everyone loses their marbles. Is it the end of the world?

An angel appears (*The Herald of Good Tidings*), bringing the news that the conjunction is occurring: the lovers are alchemically transmuted into silver and gold! A new calm infuses the land, and the earth is reordered, garlanded with chains of flowers.

Since 1976, Tcherepnin has performed many versions of *Santūr Opera*. It was staged by Peter Sellars at the 1981 Festival d’Automne in Paris, and in 1982 it was awarded the Ars Electronica Grand Prize in Linz. Shortly after receiving this honor, Tcherepnin stopped performing the work.

Santūr Opera awoke in 1994 to a strange world of people with PC’s and MIDI devices. “Here was the challenge,” says Tcherepnin. “Could this technology breathe new life into the piece without destroying its identity?” What were the digital consequences of the analog originals? The santūr’s sounds were sampled and frequency- and amplitude-sensing MIDI interface was added to the existing electronics, represented in this recording by *Dream Filterings 2* and *The Army and the Chase*. Like the Hero and the Lunar Feline, *Santūr Opera* has died and come back to life reinforced by new means, giving us structure, story, and sound with which to reorder our aural universe.

1. Overture: *The Situation in the Land*

Because the world the Hero sees is upside down, the melodies of this scene are created by inverting the harmonic series (the natural sequence of overtones that color a pitch). Instead of arising from a multiplication of the low fundamental, the tones descend as divisions of a higher pitch.

Here the strength of the hammer strikes control the pitch and timbre of the sub-harmonic pitches and melodies. (Recorded: California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, 1980.)

2. *Tentative Attempts to Set Things Right*

In this scene, we hear the voice of the Hero through the santūr's own sound as it pulses through the Serge synthesizer with a dynamic and percussive instability, determined by where and how hard the hammers strike the strings. (Recorded: The Kitchen, New York, 1979.)

3. *The Call of the Lunar Feline*

The "meowing" quality is produced by a set of oscillators linked to a master oscillator, which is manually controlled on the synthesizer to create pitch slides around the sub-harmonic degrees introduced in *The Situation in the Land*. (Recorded: Festival d'Automne, Paris, 1980.)

4. *Night Idyll*

The santūr's sound is altered by sweeping filters and varying pulsations, suggesting the languorous activities of the night. (Recorded: Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, 1978.)

5. *Dream Filterings 1*

As in a dream, the imagined voice of the santūr is filtered further and further from its origin, increasing to a maximum sensitivity and rapidity the pulsing circuitry used in *Tentative Attempts to Set Things Right*. (Recorded: 10 Langton Street, San Francisco, 1980.)

6. *Dream Filterings 2*

The dream, re-dreamed through digital technology. Here, the santūr's voice spirals even further away from its origin, as its hammer strikes control digital samples of itself, triggered with a MIDI interface connected to the santūr and the Serge. (Recorded: New Music Circle, Saint Louis, 1994.)

7. *The Army and the Chase*

As the army chases the lovers across the globe, the santūr responds with the whole of itself: strings, metal pegs, and wooden body are tapped to signal the Wilson analog delay, other modules of the Serge synthesizer, and a digital sampler. (In performance, satellite images of far-flung locations on the planet are projected, tracking the chase as it draws to its catastrophic end.) (Recorded: Watertown, Massachusetts, 1994.)

8. *Heralder of Good Tidings*

This scene is based in part on an Indian piece called *Svara Mandala*, as performed by Sri Parvakitar. The analog delay

creates a flanging effect. Although the voice of the santūr is continually going in and out of phase, the world has begun to right itself: the original upside-down harmonic series is inverted to become a right-side-up one, rising from the stability of a new fundamental. (Recorded: Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA, 1977.)

—Deborah Eve Kodiac

Ivan Tcherepnin (b Issy-les-Moulineaux, nr Paris, France, 5 Feb 1943; d Boston, 11 April 1998) comes from a family steeped in musical tradition. Grandson of conductor/composer Nikolai Tcherepnin (1873–1945), son of Alexander Tcherepnin (1899–1977) and pianist Ming Tcherepnin (1915–1991), Ivan received early training in music from his parents. He completed his studies at Harvard University, where his principal teacher was Leon Kirchner. Subsequently he joined the faculties of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Stanford University. Since 1972 Tcherepnin has taught at Harvard University, where he is also director of the Electronic Music Studio. Ivan Tcherepnin has lectured, conducted, and performed throughout Europe, Asia, and the U.S. He is an accomplished pianist as well as a versatile player of psaltery, Persian santūr, and synthesizer. In 1989 and 1991 he toured the Far East where he taught and performed in concerts of his music. In 1990 he was invited to Moscow to participate in a concert of three generations of music by Tcherepnins.

Ivan Tcherepnin's numerous composer residencies include the Santa Fe Music Festival (USA), Dartington Summer Music School (UK), Music At Marlboro (USA), and the Korsholm Music Festival (Finland). Recognition of his work includes awards from the American Society of Composers, Artists, and Publishers (ASCAP), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Rockefeller Foundation, and Grand Prize of the Ars Electronica Festival in Austria for *Santūr Opera*. Recent commissions include *The Creative Act*, a live/electronic score for the ballet *Field and Figures* by Merce Cunningham; *Concerto for Two Continents*, recently recorded by the American Wind Symphony Orchestra; and *And So It Came to Pass*, a cantata commissioned on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Oratorio Music Society at Carnegie Hall. Tcherepnin is currently completing a Double Concerto for cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Lynn Chang.

An innovator in the field of live electronic music since the mid-'60s, the composer holds a deep conviction that the ear-mind connection is the most important avenue for communication and development available to humans. Keeping this channel open and free of artificial constraints has been one of Tcherepnin's primary artistic goals. In his work, traditional and revolutionary, old and new, instrumental and electronic are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they coexist and cross-pollinate, creating new musical "flowers."

—Sue Ellen Hershman

Production Notes

Produced by Ivan Tcherepnin.

CD mastered by Ivan Tcherepnin and Robert Wolff, engineer, at Sony Classical productions, Inc., NYC.

Recording credits:

Flores musicales and *Five Songs*: Recorded at the Harvard University Electronic Music Studio, Harvard University, in October and December of 1981 by the composer and David Wilson. Mastered by Peter Storkerson.

Santūr Live!: See notes.

All selections published by the composer (ASCAP).