## cih—for flute solo

from a set of five virtuoso StarCycle pieces



(a fragment from the end of the piece (page 3))

### | pages movement I $\underline{1} | \underline{2} |$ II $\underline{1} | \underline{2} |$ III $\underline{1} | \underline{2} |$ 3 | IV $\underline{1} | \underline{2} |$ V $\underline{1} |$

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I: preludium

II: <u>nightmusic I</u>

III : sonata

IV: nightmusic II

V: aria and coda

## The StarCycle Pieces

**F**or many years, I've had the privilege of living in a very small, remote alpine village in the heart of the European Alps. The nearest road is about eight kilometers away, there are no cars and but few artificial lights of any kind. There, on moonless nights in the middle of January, the crunch of one's boots kicking into a hard layer of frozen snow is almost too loud to bear. That's how quiet it is. The depth of the silence at night seems to find its perfect complement in the vastness of the heavens above. Nothing stands between one and the stars; there's just you and the clear mountain air, and, of course, your own thoughts. Personally, I am always profoundly moved when this sense of a more basic, primal world appears, a world that would have been intimately known by other inhabitants of this place a thousand, two thousand, or even perhaps as much as 100 thousand years ago. Remarkably, this world is still there, *alive*, at the present moment, but only covered up—hidden one could almost say—by the many layers of noise of different kinds we have unintentionally and unknowingly allowed to accumulate upon it.

On nights like this, I always liked to follow the movements of one or two constellations. Orion was of course always there, looming large over a high ridge to the south like an immense cosmic warrior. But frequently direct overhead, within the band of the Milky Way, a compact, brilliant \*W\* shape would also catch my eye. And there was sometimes one star among them that was breath-taking. That star was, I was later to learn, called by astronomers *cih*. The constellation is, of course, *The Queen*, or **Cassiopeia**, wife of Cepheus and mother of Princess Andromeda. It is the name of this star, which I like to pronounce simply like the English letter 'c', barely visible in the cities of Europe or North America, which I've borrowed for my cycle of five pieces for solo flute.



The particular movement featured here—the third—is a kind of *sonata* in the sense of a strong back and forth of two contrasting qualities of musical movement; it also forms the central piece in the set of five. (All five pieces of the cycle may be played independently.) As a piece for unaccompanied solo flute, cih in turn forms part of a much larger cycle of new compositions for acoustic instruments I call together the <u>Star Cycle</u>. (See also the introductions to <u>spica—for percussion solo</u> and <u>m4—for cello solo</u>.)

Why a cycle of solo pieces? Well, there are many reasons for this. First is that I would like to place the individual virtuoso performer center stage as a kind of starting place for the exploration of both *a new language* of music as well as *a new way of doing* or performing music.(In my view, these two are inseparable.) This is in



#### new



At present, in the performance practice of Western classical music, the large orchestra (or orchestra + soloist) is tacitly given the position of primary importance. Conductors (or soloists) play the role of high-profile representative for the collective, while the members remain largely anonymous. As an alternative, more-in-tune-with-the-times performance practice, we might instead take *the individual soluist as primary*: Then, as he or she enters into larger ensembles of up to 30 or 40 voices (instruments), they maintain their individual identity and do not become dependent on any one artificially imposed central figure. This reversal of practice (and thinking) would radically transform both composition as a discipline as well as the whole nature of orchestral experience, freeing up the creativity of all those involved.

distinct contrast to the very much still lingering romantic tradition of taking the large orchestral ensemble as in some sense being primary. When there are many fundamental problems which need to be addressed—many of which relate to music's relationship to the world around it—I feel that it might be a good idea to 'go light', as it were. After many years of experience as artistic leader and conductor of larger ensembles for new music, I've come to prefer listening to what an individual composer and performer can do together. I like to see—given the challenging limitations—if they can conjure up whole new musical worlds 'out of thin air', so to speak, and share these in a meaningful way with their audiences. \*

In a way, this is directly related to my approach to poetry. (See a collection of my photographs, poems, miniatures and essays at another website, <u>picture-poems.com</u>) After all, we normally hear a poem by means of a single voice or source. When one listens musically to the poem, its rhythm, the kind of shape or trail of beats and accents it leaves behind in time, this is not that different than listening to, in this case, a piece for solo flute; and vice versa,

## Musical Movement of Solo Yoice in Poetry



Ich le-be mein Le-ben im wach-sen-den Ring-en...

(from Rilke's *Book of Hows:*"Hive my life in growing rings...")

The time-line patterns of poetry, when performed properly, are extremely subtle and very much beyond what can be captured in musical notation. At the same time, these patterns are one of the most important sources of musical movement. This relationship comes out most clearly in what is traditionally called the 'monophonic' instruments which, in contrast to a vibraphone or piano, play one sound at a time, just as the voice speaks one word.

when one *listens poetically to the the music*, the imagery evoked, the large-scale form unfolded, this can be remarkably similar to hearing a poem. When I encounter a new poem or kind of poetry, the first thing I want to hear is the poet perform it his or herself. Just a single poem. A minute is enough. If there's something there, it will reveal itself I feel in the voice. Likewise in music, I prefer to hear a single solo composition. For it is here that the strengths and weakness of a musical language instantly, without hiding behind the massive effects of the orchestra, reveal themselves. What is the continuity like, the storyline of the music? Does the music come fully to life in the hands of the performer, in the acoustics of the particular space, or does it remain an abstract model merely transposed to a traditional instrument? These are important questions which can then be clearly and unequivocally answered.\*

Also, in connection with this difference between the large collective and the individual voice, I might mention here the problem of standards. If orchestral and ensemble performance practice is to be re-invented, then perhaps the place to start is with the individual composer and virtuoso performer. This is because, as everyone knows, large orchestras remain at present not only profoundly stuck in past repertoire, but also in an entire—in my view then—outmoded approach to, or way of thinking about, Music and Art generally.So, in all fairness, one can hardly expect anything new to happen there. At the same time, the specialized ensembles which have in many of the larger cities of the Western world sprung up out of necessity since the Second World War are, with all due respect, just that: *specialized*. Personally, I feel that it's a great mistake to isolate new music from both the great music of the past (of all traditions and cultures) as well as from other

art forms, especially poetry and dance. Yet that is precisely what has occurred. And as many of the wonderful musicians of these contemporary music groups will tell you in their more candid moments that the quality of many of the new pieces performed nowadays remains dramatically less than both the quality and the level of technical expertise of the performers themselves. There are many reasons for this, I believe, but just let me say here that, in a small way then, I see the **Star Cycle Project** as a way of addressing a few of these, all at once, and one at a time, as it were.

**T**o sum up: If the large modern orchestra has come to represent what I like to call *cracked tea cup culture*—the image is one of the precious china of wealthy patrons disintegrating under the pressure of the opening bars of *Varèse's Arcana*, then the culture of the typical contemporary performance group might be called that of the *shattered wine glass*. Here, the image is of a much more heroic/tragic situation of small groups of highly dedicated and talented individuals 'breaking themselves apart ', like the ringing glass in Rilke's Sonnet to Orpheus, in their efforts to create a musical culture—largely unsuccessfully, in my view—that's truly alive. This is briefly the general background situation as I see it, and why I've come to argue for what I call a <u>new creative tradition</u> as well as a <u>new approach to music</u> for solo instrumental voices that is of necessity no longer separate from especially the guiding spirit of poetry.

#### The Shape of Change

**B**riefly, for the performer, here are a few comments concerning the unique rhythmic continuity and notation of the third **sonata movement** of *cih*:

If it is true that music cuts a distinct pattern which we perceive, experience, remember as the shape of change, then the music with which we have surrounded ourselves both commercial as well as much of the well-known classics—is definitely *square*. I mean by this simply that the music both tends towards *groups of four* and is almost always *constant*. (In musical terms, 'square' means 4/4 of some kind, whereas 'constant' means a non-changing regular tempo.) To its tremendous credit, the music

#### Balance and the Shape of Change



tendency towards the overly regular



tendency towards the overly #regular



the new complementarity

of the first half of the past century powerfully broke out of this rigid mold. We now have the shifting, variable meters introduced and perfected by Stravinsky, Bartók and Varèse. We alse have the simultaneous meters of Ives, and later, the variable tempi introduced by Boulez and Elliott Carter. Of course, these experiements themselves led to an imbalance of a different kind: instead of *overly square*, from the 1950's onwards, there was a tendency to become *overly irregular*, which has given us a kind of anti-commerical music, one without meter—that is, the feeling of moving the body to a pulse—altogether. (One could say that what has come to be known as 'minimal music' is just that, a rather over-simplified reaction to this.) I would suggest that what we need is rather *complementarity*, an approach in which the balance of both regular and irregular patterns is taken as primary, and not any one side of what is really a feature of natural movement generally. (See poster: <u>Understanding the Shape of Change</u>)

#### Glissandi in Time

In this particular movement of cih, I've borrowed especially from the work of Elliott Carter and his <u>Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano</u> (photo). I conducted this piece a number of years ago, working together with the composer, and was very taken with the originality of its central movement. Here's a fragment from the beginning of the flute piece, which features similar patterns of *accelerando* and *decelerando*, but used here in a very different way:



Now, the key musical or rhythmic feature here—*the shape of the music's change* is a smooth, continuous 'getting faster' and 'getting slower'. The music does this in a necessarily very precise way, moving in steps until the tempo or speed of the basic meter *is doubled*, then doubled again, and again. Or vice versa: halved and halved again, and so forth. This is directly analogous to singing or playing a sliding

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tone—a so-called *glissando*—from one pitch to another one an octave higher, and so on. That's why I call these doublings of tempo *octaves*. Here's a sketch of the cycle of relationships. (Mathematicians, among whom I unfortunately do not include

myself, will notice, to use their language here for a moment, a fractal-like iterative function at the root of this pattern of movement, with *self-similar relationships at differences of scale*. The key remains, however, that *it sounds beautiful*, much as if the graceful spirals of ferns had been translated into sound.(see **photo/miniature**: <u>metaphor</u>) This phrase—self-similar relationships at a differences of scale—is an important one to remember, I think. This is because it points to a simple yet powerful way of looking at or thinking about both structure and movement in the future.):



#### Rhythmic "Spin Outs"

Another rhythmic feature of the music is the way it "spins out" of the continuously changing patterns sketched above into fast passages in a contrasting, constant meter. It is especially this higher-level distinction that gives the third movement its sonatina quality:



## The "Open Center"

And lastly, there's a nested "open center" or brief slow movement in the middle of the piece. It is full of silence, and the unique quality of the flute's lower register:



#### The Natural Balance of Simplicity and Complexity

In closing, I should also briefly say something about musical complexity and difficulty as seen especially from the performers point of view. This is a topic I have over the years out of necessity given considerable attention to, in early years as a conductor—I was known in the past for taking on with the greatest possible integrity even the most challenging scores, especially in my work with the **ASKO Ensemble**\*\*—but more recently also in cultural philosophy and poetry.

In my experience, the first step on the road to clarity is to sharply differentiate between true **complexity** which in this way of thinking is *always good*, and that which is **merely complicated** which is *always bad*.

So I'm introducing here a crucial difference in the use of the two common words.

*Complexity* is the richness of the many-voiced, intricate weave which finds its perfect complement in the plainsong of simplicity's single thread. *Complicatedness*, on the other hand, has nothing to do with these, and is merely what one might call *unnecessary difficulty*.

Those are two important words for the performing artist to remember.



## Difference between Complexity and Complicatedness

Remarkably, the waste of energy which results with the unnecessary difficulties of complicatedness is not a feature of natural systems. This does not mean that some musics may not be, especially when played for the first time, extremely difficult. It means only that there should be both very good technical as well as a highly significant musical reasons—first and foremost for the listener—why this is the case.

In my view, unnecessary difficulty should not be tolerated. It seems to me that, following nature's example here, we ought best strive for the most elegant solution to the problems at hand. But how? Well, generally, I would say by simply *taking away*, by doing away with all the things that get in simplicity's way. Interestingly, this is directly analogous to how one learns to play without tension: one does not—indeed, one could say as they do in the **Alexander Technique**—one *cannot* try to perform without tension. Instead, one simply gives attention to the facts of unnecessary tension as they maifest and thereby becomes increasingly aware of their source.)

In this context, one of the main obstacles on this road to clarity is what I would call the *cult of complicatedness*. One could argue that this is a powerful force in Western culture generally. In poetry, this happens when, for example, the unity of meaning and movement are not attended to properly as one whole; in music, it occurs, for example, when composers and performers alike confuse physical density and a kind of athletic hyperactivity—as well as the superficially sophisticated notation which has co-evolved with these—with real musical inerest, intensity or expression.

So one of my intentions with regard to this set of pieces for flute, as well as the Star-Cycle generally, is to create a virtuosic music for the best of a new generation of New Music performers which embraces fully this natural complementarity of the simple with the truly complex, but which also works diligently to eliminate all that is merely in the way. This is of course by no means a small task. That is why I think it best if we find our points of orientation—right from the very beginning—in distant stars, regardless of how faint and or how unfamiliar they might at first appear.



| mouseover for controls / lower left for full-screen mode |

\* The question of which musical body we consider central or primary—that of the large orchestra or individual soloist—is related to the similar question in literature of which form is seen as most important, the full-length novel or the short poem. I would without hesitation, in both cases, say the latter. This is especially true, perhaps, in times like the present era of metaphysical and spiritual crisis, for it is with both the performing solo musician as well as the solitary poem, more than any other art forms, I believe, that the whole question of meaning, logic and relevance is necessary refined for the listener or reader to its most essential possible expression. With this comes, when we are persevering and lucky, the miracle of clarity.

\*\* I started working with the Amsterdam Studenten Kamer Orkest in *January* 1974. At the time, as the name suggests, this was an amateur ensemble well-known for its relatively high level of performance practice and its exclusive focus on contemporary music. I became its conductor and music director the same year. In the summer of 1974 I founded together with Fons van Esch a smaller, professional group we called simply the **ASKO Ensemble**. (I remember the date vividly.The evening before Richard Nixon had just resigned on late-night Dutch TV.. Both Fons and I had the feeling we were entering a new era, so we decided to mark the moment with a plan for a new group.)

That summer we started rehearsal with two pieces which were to become important to the character of the group, **Edgar Varèse's** *Octandre*, and **Anton Webern's** *Concerto Op. 24.* Later signature pieces were my own <u>Schlieren</u> and <u>Pharos</u>, **Charles Ives'** *Over the Pavements;* and **Iannis Xenakis'** *Anaktoria.* 

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#### cih—for flute solo: movement I (preludium)



#### cih—for flute solo: movement II (nightmusic I)



cih-for flute solo: movement IV (nightmusic II) in reverso



cih-for flute solo: movement V (aria and coda)



#### And: cih-movement III, transcribed for keyboard (large 11 x 17 format (A3); 4 pages)



| NEW: DOWNLOAD MP3 of a performance model of Cih: complete cycle mp3 (c. 13' 08") [3 Mb]

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cih—for flute solo movement I: preludium











by Cliff Crego

(trés sec e marcato)













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duration: c. 3' 30"

cih—for flute solo

movement II: nightmusic I



by Cliff Crego











## four octaves of tempo

(1) 112 x 6 = 672(2)  $56 \ge 6 = 336$ (2) 112 x 3 = 336(a)  $56 \times 3 = 168$ (b)  $28 \times 3 = 84$ 

cih—for flute solo movement III: sonata

(a smooth, continuous decelerando)











by Cliff Crego

= 112 (constant)























duration: c. 3' 15"

cih—for flute solo

movement IV: nightmusic II











by Cliff Crego





(senza vibrato)



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cih—for flute solo (with a thin, movement V: aria and coda breathy sound) = 56 (modulate to a warm, open sound)  $ppp \ll f p$ mf <(sostenuto e poco vibrato) Τē tete 0 Þ<u>e</u> 8 > pтf (sonoro) (with a breathy, 'phantom' sound...) = 84(2:3)5 5 p(modulate to more assertive, larger sound; metric) 18  $f^{(pp)}$ >(fluid pulses, without accent) 24 Ę  $f \stackrel{\star{p}}{=} p -$ 12 12 5 -5 (= 84) (suddenly there!) 27 f (subito) *\_\_\_\_\_ff*\_\_\_

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by Cliff Crego





(Photo: Glacier Water on Granite, the Alps)

# **Creative Tradition**

In Art as well as Nature, there is a necessary complementarity between the conservative tradition which embodies and safeguards the knowledge of the past and the revolutionary insight which reveals the new. One is mechanical in a subtle way, the other, creative. The dynamic balance between the two is crucial. Too much stubborn repetition and the source of the past and the revolutionary insight which reveals the new. One is mechanical in a subtle way, the other, creative. The dynamic balance between the two is crucial. Too much stubborn repetition and the source of fresh meaning goes dry. Too much of the new and we lose all the skill needed to make the new manifest. A creative tradition is then at once both constant and changing, like the solid bed of rock which allows the river to flow wild and free.

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(Photo: Glacier Stream, Spring Snowmelt, the Alps)

# **New Music, New Poetry**

In both music and poetry, what is important is not so much what we think of as style or aesthetics, but rather the quality of energy which manifests in a piece as we bring it to life in performance. What makes music or poetry relevant or new regardless of when it was composed In both music and poetry, what is important is not so much what we think of as style or aesthetics, but rather the quality of energy which manifests in a piece as we bring it to life in performance. What makes music or poetry relevant or new, regardless of when it was composed, who is playing or saying it, or from which world culture it originates, is the strength of resonance its energy has with the repertoire of metaphysical and spiritual urgencies of the present moment.

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After a performance of Elliott Carter's Double Concerto in the Concertgebouw with the ASKO Ensemble and Percussion Group the Hague, the Netherlands (left to right: Lien van der Vliet (harpsichord), Elliott Carter, Cliff Crego and René Eckhardt (piano))

(click to enlarge: photo, VI.1982: Vincent Rombouts)





(Photo: Vincent Rombouts)



# Leys of Love

Metaphor? A movement of resonance, perhaps -- a rhyming

not of sounds or words, but of meaning.

Do you not know this light and quick movement of energy as two separate thoughts touch wings and fly off into the distance together?

(Photo: Fladlehead Fern spring, the Alps)

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Print one page at a time.)



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A slightly faster primary tempo than quarter = 112 may be taken. In that case, all four octaves of tempo----( $\mathbf{4}$ ) = 112/6; ( $\mathbf{3}$ ) = 112/3; ( $\mathbf{2}$ ) = 56/3; ( $\mathbf{1}$ ) = 28, as well as the subdivisions between them, should be shifted proportionally.

cih-version for piano solo

movement III: sonata: a transcription of a piece for wind instrument—flute—for keyboard—plano or harpsichord







#### next page

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