

## **Steve Layton (1956- ) Vision**

A collection of pieces composed and realized in Seattle and Houston between 2007 and 2009. Unlike traditional methods of composition and performance, all the tracks here combine performance and composition in the same moment. Each part is composed directly to the digital version of a “piano roll” -- which, beyond the traditional markings for pitch, duration and articulation, holds all of my own personal nuances of performance. This means that the “score” holds not only the notes, but my own realization as well. The moment the score is finished I can play and record the performance realization in a single recorded take.

None of the performances take place on a traditional instruments. Rather, all of the parts are played simultaneously by a single Alesis QSR synthesizer and many treated samples from various recordings, driven by the sequencer score or layered in a number of tracks, with a digital reverb creating the “hall”.

While some may consider all of this to be simply “machine music”, I think of it as nothing of the kind. The score is composed in every way identically to how we composers have done so for centuries with pen and paper; but in addition the score records my own “touch” in every note, something not possible before the coming of digital sequencers. And the synthesizer is no more a “machine” than a violin is. Both are truly instruments, each designed to create and channel vibrations from within their body into the air and ear, all of it the impetus of a human agency.

Some may also argue that I've given up the experience of hearing the pieces performed “live”, by “real” interpreters. Some part of that is true (though most of these pieces could easily be performed by others, if anyone wanted to take the time to work up a more traditional score); but in my mind it's more of a trade than a giving-up. In some ways the experience is *more* intimate; in each piece the connection is absolutely direct from the composer's mind, hand and ear to that of his audience, and all one-on-one.

-- Steve Layton / Houston, February 2009

## **Summer Ultraviolet (2007) *piano, brass, treated recording***

The recorded sound that underlies the entire piece is all derived from the single recording of a honeybee, the same heard right at the outset of the work. The bee was recorded by biologist/musician Javier Herrera near Seville, Spain during the summer of 2006. The bee "mantra" repeats 24 times, once for each hour of the day, with a small coda "echo" attached to the end. The piano and brass find the structure and flow from things that seem to appear in the "mantra".

## **The Place of the Solitaires (2007) *percussion ensemble***

In 2005 I started a set of pieces for percussion; the first, *The Pulling into the Sky*, was quickly finished and I had started the second when I got a little sidetracked. Not quite two years later I finally returned to the piece, and this is the result. This movement introduces melodic percussion into the ensemble: bells, marimba and vibraphone. The title is from a Wallace Stevens poem, which when you find it will explain the piece as well as anything else can.

### **Pioggia di autunno (2008) *treated recordings***

Made for a project conceived by my good friend, Italian musician Marco Lucchi, “Autumn Rain” combines treated recordings of pieces by Captain Beefheart, Jaroslav Krcek, and now-defunct Baltimore band Cicaeda.

### **Architecture of a Sunset (2008) *piano, imaginary ensemble, treated recording***

A single experience can often contain an entire story; like a sun setting, which passes through all kinds of states on the way to its disappearance. The recorded sound coloring the instrumental performance is actually derived from the continuous din of small metal balls falling through *pachinko* machines in a Japanese game parlor.

### **Dogtown (2009) *treated recording***

The voice is the American poet Charles Olson, reading from his *Maximus: Dogtown I* in 1962. The music is treated recordings by muhr, Toshi Ichianagi, and Fathmount.

### **Red in Red (2008) *piano, marimba, vibraphone***

A dream of a room with three walls, the fourth somehow missing...

### **Joji Aria (2008) *percussion samples, treated recordings***

The torso of an aria, from the ruin of an opera that will never exist, from a time before words. The piece uses treated recordings of both Japanese composer Joji Yuasa's solo flute piece *Terms of Temporal Detailing* and Romanian composer Doina Rotaru's work *Uroboros*.

All pieces © 2007, 2008, 2009 by Steve Layton (ASCAP).  
All pieces composed, performed and recorded by Steve Layton  
at NiwoSound Studio, Seattle and Houston.  
Sequencer: Voyetra Record Producer Pro  
Synthesizer: Alesis QSR  
Reverb: Alesis Midiverb  
Recorder/Editor: Goldwave, Adobe Audition

Contact: [www.niwo.com](http://www.niwo.com)

1 - Summer Ultraviolet 2007

2 - The Place of the Solitaires 2007

3 - Pioggia di autunno 2008

4 - The Architecture of a Sunset 2008

5 - Dogtown (Charles Olson) 2009

6 - Red in Red 2007

7 - Joji Aria 2008

All composed, played, recorded by Steve Layton at NiwoSound Seattle and NiwoSound Houston  
© 2007, 2008, 2009 Steve Layton / NiwoSound (ASCAP)  
[www.niwo.com](http://www.niwo.com)

Steve Layton



Vision



niwō  
sound