

William Bolcom



Primer (2014)

- I. Primer
- II. Whirligig
- III. Wild Horses
- IV. Mr. S's Magic Dice
- V. A Gray Day in Venice
- VI. Action-painting
- VII. La Sarabande de l'Infini
- VIII. Hommage à Satie, le Divo de l'Empire

Length: 15 minutes

World Premiere by ZOFO: 12/7/2014,
Morrison Artists Series, San Francisco State
University, San Francisco, California

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LIVE PERFORMANCE VIDEO, [here](#)

Notes from the composer about *Primer*:

"The 19th century was awash in four-hand performances of every description, mostly of course at homes. Many apartments in Vienna had huge living rooms to accommodate sizable audiences for music soirées; Brahms, I believe, premiered all four symphonies in that format, and I remember in college reading with friends through Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonies, *Das Lied von der Erde*, and so much wonderful music from Schubert to Stravinsky written directly for the medium. Before recordings, for much of the world it was a way to learn music one could not hope to hear otherwise. In the concert world two-piano teams are far more common, with many touring throughout the last century. I've written for several two-piano duos but no-one has asked for a piece for one piano, four hands, till now.

A revival of interest in four-hand music seems long overdue! PRIMER both reviews the ensemble in a series of short studies, involving unusual hand displacement, rhythmic counterpoint, and the like. *Primer*, the first study, is choreographic in nature; *Whirligig*, a pitting together of musical wheels; *Wild Horses*, a study in coordination; *Mr. S's Magic Dice*, interlocking of hands between players.

A Gray Day in Venice begins a series of stylistic adventures, here an evocation of a Mendelssohnian gondola, where *Action-painting* invokes the carefully scattered drips in Jackson Pollock. *La Sarabande de l'Infini* is one of two wreaths laid at the tombs of two French masters of piano music for four hands, here Debussy; and for a finale *Hommage à Satie, le Divo de l'Empire*, recalling the Velvet Gentleman's cabaret career."

Review

SAN FRANCISCO CLASSICAL VOICE

William Bolcom

Named 2007 **Composer of the Year** by Musical America, and honored with multiple Grammy Awards for his ground-breaking setting of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, William Bolcom is a composer of cabaret songs, concertos, sonatas, operas, symphonies, and much more. He was awarded the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music for his *Twelve New Etudes* for piano. As a pianist he has recorded for Advance, Jazzology, Musical Heritage, Nonesuch, Vox, and Omega. For 40 years throughout the United States, Canada, and abroad, he has performed and recorded with his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris.

Mr. Bolcom taught composition at the University of Michigan from 1973-2008. Named a full professor in 1983, he was Chairman of the Composition Department from 1998 to 2003 and was named the Ross Lee Finney Distinguished University Professor of Composition in the fall of 1994. He retired from teaching in 2008.