

Mp3 Curium - Nowever



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A suite of E.E. Cummings poems in an electronic landscape. 22 MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Ambient, SPOKEN WORD: With Music Details: Evan Sornstein's great appreciation for the unfettered humanity of E.E. Cummings is celebrated on this suite of twenty-two poems, read by twenty-two different people evenly spaced around the world. Set against an evocative, electronic backdrop of detailed soundscape, Nowever explores life and meaning, searching for Cummings' "truths" through his own works, interpreted by the voices of glad and young, aged and ageless busy monsters all from Taipei to Glasgow, Sardinia to California. "...poetry and every other art was and is and forever will be strictly and distinctly a question of individuality..." - E.E. Cummings (1953) INTERVIEW :::::::::::::::::::: 1) What was the impetus behind the creation of this suite? I've been interested in linking text to music for a while and was finishing up a twenty-minute piece with cut-ups of a poem by William Blake called Auguries of Innocence. And at the end of working on this, I was complaining to a friend that working so long on one piece was wearing me down. He then suggested that I do a suite of really short pieces, say, less than a minute each. So I thought about this and it immediately occurred to me that there are many poems from E.E. Cummings that would make some very interesting material. Now, it's important for me to step back for a moment: I don't really like poetry. It never meant much to me except E.E. Cummings. When I was a kid, my father showed me three poets, and one of them, I think now, really set the stage for how I was to proceed with creating from that point on. Somehow, Cummings poetry made sense to me. His work is clever, direct, and profound in a way that no one else has accomplished. So many of his poems have distinct personality, so I decided to pick a number of poems that could match the different ways people speak English. I chose a particular poem that matched a person and then composed the music to be 'a setting' that supported the poem. So, in time, they became portraits of sorts, as well. The poems themselves

became the vehicle for showing the different personalities of these people. 2) And what was the process like? I began asking around to different people in my life who I thought had an interesting way of speaking, and would search for a poem that somehow matched them. And I began recording these people reading the poems: some over the phone, some in the studio, some at their houses, in the open air wherever it worked. Then I set to dissecting the readings and the poems and conveyed the readings to music, building a sort of landscape the readings and poems could live in. I asked my five-year old nephew; my friend's 85-year-old grandmother; friends and co-workers from Nicaragua, Scotland, England, France, Italy, Germany. This process never ended. It took over two years and I could have kept going. I had to stop at some point! There are several other accents I never got or finished: Hawaiian Pidgin, Wisconsin, Japanese English, Indian English, Icelandic English, Scouse, Cockney...it really could have turned into quite an accent project. But in the end, I really need to concentrate on the music since that is what I like to do most. 3) When you close your eyes, where do you see this suite being played? In what environments? The suite does require a good amount of attention to really take it in, and sitting at home with the booklet and headphones does make sense. However, I have also been working on a video installation of environments to help support and focus the listening process and the experience of the pieces. The music by itself is mostly calming and doesn't need to be paid close attention to. But to fully appreciate the poems, I think that sitting down and listening in a focused manner is the perfect way. 4) Who are your influences? E.E. Cummings disregarded so many rules about how poetry was to be written and heard. I thought it appropriate to take a similar approach to the presentation of his poetry. They are not performed or edited in a way that is 'normal' but I think they do the poems justice. I can't venture to think if he would like them, however! 5) What equipment do you use? a Mac. Propellerhead's Reason was the sole sound source. A basic AT4033 Audio Technica microphone and Digital Performer for the digital editing. 6) What have you learned about Cummings through the creation of the suite? What I did learn was an even greater appreciation of Cummings's spirit and wit. I read hundreds of his poems to find the right ones for Nowever. It was like doing a research project on him. There are a few poems I really love which I did not use they were too sacred, perhaps. Also, there are a good number of poems of his that are really mind-fucks and wouldn't render well to being spoken. Listening to them would be way too surreal and they wouldn't make sense. The one poem we did that is closest to this dilemma, the one read by John Barron: 'now air is air and thing is thing'. That one does take a good amount of concentration to

get what it is about. I strove to pick poems that can be understood while being listened to not an easy task when it comes to Cummings. Being that he wrote mostly in the 1920-50s, I also realize how ahead of his time he really was. Gertrude Stein was out there too, but arty and obscure, while Cummings was direct, honest, and clear.

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