

Then, after a massive crescendo, the bass soloist enters. Both singers, accompanied by the entire orchestra, intone a series of ascending scales creating an unmistakable musical image of sunrise. The "sun salutation" in this section (*salut le blanc, salut le jaune*) is followed by Creeley's reflection upon all the "wonders" the new light allows us to see. Life energy is the subject of the ensuing percussion interlude, featuring the "boobams" (a set of tuned drums made of bamboo) especially built for this piece by Tom Kolor.

Part II

Part II begins on a high point marked "dramatic" in the score. It is high noon, and the vibrant rhythms of the orchestra affirm a positive belief in eternity as the bass shouts the word *toujours* ("always") at the top of his range. At this point, the Neruda poem, an *ars poetica* about how nothing can stop an artist who sings "from one sun to the next" (*de sol a sol*) and embraces both being and non-being (*ser y no ser*). Neruda's passionate words bring about the most massive climax in the piece so far, with the orchestra joined by electronics. The electronic cues form a vibrant "call-and-response" with the orchestra, providing what Felder describes as "little lightning flashes" in the overall musical texture.

Part III

Part III again starts from almost nothing, as the "red fruit" of the setting sun turns all the previous excitement into "memory" (*souvenir*). As with the stanza of Part I, this section of the poem is also presented twice: after a more tentative version with soprano solo (the bell-like sounds heard here are also electronic modifications of human voices!), the bass joins in as the melody becomes much more sharp-edged. For most of the movement, the melodic line is descending, reversing the contour of the "sunrise" section, but then, unexpectedly, we hear a dramatic outburst; after all, this is not an entirely peaceful sunset, as the dying sun has to "burn our filth"—effecting the transmutation of all that was flawed during that glorious daytime of life and its elevation to a purer spiritual realm. This is followed by the second Creeley poem; just as the first one was followed by a section for percussion alone, the second is preceded by such a section. This time, however, there are no noisy boobams and roto-toms, only mysterious shakers, soft log drums and wood blocks, setting the tone for "Buffalo Evening," sung by the basso, for the most part, in his most *profondo* register. Special emphasis is placed on the words "with the light gone" toward the end, where the singer swiftly moves to the top of his range. A "cold, autumnal, distant" orchestral postlude follows, with

divided strings in quarter-tones and a haunting bass-flute solo played "as if a private mantra," leading into the second electronic interlude.

Part IV

The "salutation of midnight" in Part IV begins with the bass soloist whispering Daumal's words, accompanied only by electronics. This recitation segues into the Gioia poem about "Insomnia," evoking the mysterious noises of the night as heard by the solitary observer who also "salutes midnight" in his own way. In his "Midnight Song" from Zarathustra, Nietzsche used the word *tief* (deep) eight times in eleven lines of poetry; Felder's setting of Gioia contains some of the lowest tessituras ever encountered in vocal music. Back to Daumal, we traverse an eerily "cold" and austere landscape until the soprano, who has left the stage earlier, returns with a free, quasi-improvisatory and intensely melismatic passage reprising the first poem about the hatching of the dawn. Accompanied only by two trumpets, this passage (for three sopranos, as it were) traces a final crescendo-decrescendo arc, summing up a cosmic journey that, in fact, never ends.

The composition, as we have seen, is all about Time, and the idea of Time takes on multiple layers of meaning in Felder's music. Time's personality can be perceived as Janus-faced; it can be strict (in the extremely complex polyrhythms) or flexible (in a number of unmeasured passages). The constant fluctuations of tempo, from slow to fast and back, also draw attention to the fact that time is not simply a matter of clocks. Spiritual time (the Great Infinity) cannot be measured; it is only we humans who impose divisions and increments on a universal flow that knows no bounds.

-Peter Laki and Adrienne Elisha

Signal and Slee Sinfonietta Personnel

Brad Lubman, conductor

Heather Buck, soprano

Ethan Herschenfeld, bass

Jessica Schmitz*, flute

Emlyn Johnson, flute

Jackie Leclair, oboe/English horn

Andrian Sandl*, clarinet/bass clarinet

Marianne Gythfeldt, bass clarinet/contrabass clarinet

Adam Unsworth, horn

Kate Sheeran*, horn
Mike Gurfield*, trumpet
Will Lang*, trombone
Ben Herrington, trombone
Jonathan Greenberg, bass trombone
James Rogers, contrabass trombone
Sophie Rusnock*, harp
Oliver Hagen*, piano/celeste
Tom Kolor, percussion
Bill Solomon*, percussion
Doug Perkins*, percussion
Irvine Arditti, violin 1
Olivia De Prato*, violin 1
Yuki Numata, violin 1
Molly Germer*, violin 1
Veronique Mattheiu, violin 1
Lauren Cauley*, violin 2
Lili Sarayrah*, violin 2
Will Knuth*, violin 2
Colleen Brannen, violin 2
Tudor Dornescu, violin 2
Victor Lowrie*, viola
Kallie Ciechomski, viola
Isabel Hagen*, viola
Adrienne Elisha, viola
Lauren Radnofsky*, cello
Jonathan Golove, cello
Emleigh Vandiver, cello
Greg Chudzik*, bass
Eleonore Oppenheim*, bass
Eric Polenik, bass

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Bruce Jackson & Eileen Felder, photography
Chris Jacobs, technical director
Olivier Pasquet, video & electronics
Patty Rihn, lighting design
J.T. Rinker, electronics
Matt Sargent, live mix

“Les quatre temps cardinaux”

René Daumal (1908-44) was a French poet, mystic and Sanskrit scholar, who seemed to live his short life entirely in the spiritual world (he died of tuberculosis at the age of 36). In his poem “Les quatre temps cardinaux,” he imitated some profound metaphysical secrets inherent in the daily cycle of dawn, noon, dusk, and midnight. Through the continual appearance and disappearance of Light, the poet saw the times of day as manifestations of the eternal recurrence of birth and death. This universal vision of Time (not merely measuring but actually defining our existence) has obvious musical implications, which David Felder explores in his monumental new work. Daumal's title, which the composer adopted, makes implicit reference to les quatre points cardinaux (four cardinal points, or directions). Each temps cardinal (time of day) occupies a separate stanza, and Felder devoted a separate movement to each one in his work. He also included poems by three other poets, illuminating additional facets of the concept of Time. Thus we will hear from the eminent American poet and legendary UB professor Robert Creeley (1926-2005), and Dana Gioia (b. 1950), whose use of metered verse makes him one of our most “musical” contemporary poets, as well as excerpts from a famous poem by Chilean Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda (1904-73), one of the great classics of 20th-century literature. The trilingual composition employs two soloists, a chamber orchestra and an electronic component, consisting of the poetic texts, as read either by the poets themselves (Creeley, Gioia) or others, and subjected to various procedures of computer analysis and re-synthesis. There are two substantial passages for electronics alone, one after each Creeley poem.

The work is in twelve movements, divided into four parts. Within each part, the movements follow one another with little or no break. Each part is devoted to one stanza from Daumal's poem, augmented by the additional poems as well as two longer, purely orchestral sections.

Part I

The journey from dawn to midnight (with an announcement of a new dawn at the very end) takes us through the widest extremes in terms of musical vocabulary, vocal, instrumental and electronic textures, as well as emotional affect. The piece takes shape gradually; in the first movement, the “hatching” of the new day is represented by isolated, mysterious noises and a soprano line that contains only some, but by no means, all, the words in the poem.