

Water Music

There is a water cistern under Fort Worden in Port Townsend, Washington. The cistern is approximately 65 yards in diameter and 18 feet high. It was built in 1907 as the fort's water supply and it held 2,000,000 gallons of water. The cistern has not been used for storage since the 1930's. The naturally occurring reverberations can last up to 45 seconds, making it a unique environment for music. It has been the site of only a few recordings. The improvisations on the Neriage porcelain flute were an interaction with the remarkable acoustics of this magical and mystical abandoned water reservoir.

Finding a location so close to home with a sonic similarity to India's Taj Mahal was incredible! The recording technique, using only two microphones; one trained on the flute and one to pick up the ambient echo, creates an organic sound that is sonically complete.

Sitting on the shore of Manzanita Bay on Bainbridge Island, I can reflect on all the sources that came together to create Water Music. The flow of the saltwater as the tides return to the bay makes for a beautiful location in which to play the Neriage flute. This instrument is a product of my artistic collaboration with the very talented potter, Rick Stafford. These flutes are the embodiment of art piece as musical instrument. The suite of Neriage flute improvisations are dedicated to both the artistic spirit and the water.

Paul Horn has been a pioneer flutist and composer, particularly in the realm of creating music in alternative environments. From India's Taj Mahal to the Great Pyramid of Egypt, his music has inspired me to stretch my creativity and strive for new levels of musicianship. My interpretations of Paul Horn's improvisations from inside the Taj Mahal are a tribute to his artistic and creative expressions.

The next three compositions by Los Angeles composer Michael Isaacson reflect our long friendship, Michael's generous willingness to create new works for meaningful occasions, and his balancing of contemporary flute techniques with emotionally crafted melodies. Isaacson's Water Music, composed specifically for the premiere of this recording in the cistern, asks the flutist to play Piccolo, C flute and Alto flute (head joint only and complete) as well as declaim an alphabetized list of words which paints the many moods of water. The work rides an emotional tide of dreams on the sounds of the voice and the flutes.

Isaacson's Seraglio was recorded in a studio to enable me to overdub the finger cymbals with my alto flute performance. Originally composed for contra-bass flute and finger cymbals, it is a wonderfully evocative conjuring of the exotic stories of Scherezade, and the slowly undulating rhythms of life in a harem.

Finally, Babi Yar, which I commissioned from Michael Isaacson, was played in Kiev, Ukraine in May 1994 at the site of the tragic Babi Yar massacre. This memorial held by the First International Conference of Jewish Women remembered the mass execution of over 100,000 Jews by the Nazis in September 1944. The mass grave in the ravine at Babi Yar, now covered over with lush foliage, is a wrenching recollection of an atrocity that will never be forgotten. The musical themes of Babi Yar are an intertwining of motifs from the Jewish memorial service and a melodic interpretation of heartfelt cries. Recording this piece in the cistern magnified the haunting melody line, making it even more poignant.

Performed and recorded in the cistern and the studio, July 1996

Recorded, mixed and mastered by Neville Pearsall, Synergy Sound Studios, Port Townsend, WA

Neriage flutes created by Rick Stafford and Laura Sperling

Cover Design by Pete Saloutos

Layout Design and Design Production by Scott Sperling

Executive Producer: Laura Sperling

Produced by Michael Isaacson

Special Thanks

Scott Sperling, Michael Isaacson, Paul Horn, Rick Stafford, Pete Saloutos, Blanche and Ira Nestle, Bob McAllister, John Ranney, Charles Fishman, Lynn Hazan, Sarah Lindsley, Margit Sperling and Eli Sperling

Laura Sperling

WATER MUSIC

Neriage Flute Improvisations

1. *Manzanita* Laura Sperling (Egg Cream Music-ASCAP) 5:56
2. *Nerikomi* Laura Sperling (Egg Cream Music-ASCAP) 6:18
3. *Water Music* Michael Isaacson (Egg Cream Music-ASCAP) 9:54

From: Inside the Taj Mahal

4. *Prologue* Paul Horn (Samadhi Music, SOCAN) 4:52
5. *Agra* Paul Horn (Samadhi Music, SOCAN) 2:42
6. *Mumtaz Mahal* Paul Horn (Samadhi Music, SOCAN) 4:57
7. *Ustad Isa* Paul Horn (Samadhi Music, SOCAN) 2:55
8. *Shah Jahan* Paul Horn (Samadhi Music, SOCAN) 7:52
9. *Seraglio* Michael Isaacson (Alry Music-ASCAP) 7:20
10. *Babi Yar* Michael Isaacson (Egg Cream Music-ASCAP) 7:52

Total Time 60:48

All selections performed by Laura Sperling