

Paul STEENHUISEN - PROGRAM NOTES

PIECE: *cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles*

Commissioned through the Canadian Music Centre's "New Music for Young Musicians" project, *cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles* was written for intermediate flutist and tape. As a young music student, I enjoyed playing music from the Baroque and Classic periods, although I derived the most pleasure from improvising at the piano. I played the strings with my fingers, putting pencils and erasers inside the piano, and making scraping sounds with things I found in my basement when no one else was around. Years later, while attending university, I learned that this was called preparing a piano, and was first achieved through the genius of John Cage in New York (25 years prior to my work as an 8 year-old in suburban Vancouver). For Cage, his explorations were made in order to make the piano sound like a gamelan, or a collection of percussion instruments. For me, it was because I liked making the sounds that I was usually told were errors, or unrefined uses of instruments, and this approach to instrumental colour has continued to develop throughout my career. Now, through luck, magic, chance, and will, I spend my days inventing, working with, and shaping these colourful and beautiful sounds - in a deeper, more organized way than before, but still in contact with the sense of exploration I felt while improvising as a kid. *cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles* was written for similarly adventurous young flutists who experiment by playing some of the unusual sounds available on their instruments, and who will enjoy the ways I extend the sound of the flute and the many electronic sounds in the music they will play.