GATEWAY SUMMER SOUND
Abstracted Animal & Other Sounds
Composed by Ann McMillan
Side I

a) *Amber '75* sound sources: frogs and insects courtesy of Dr. Richard Alexander, one bell recorded by composer

"Amber" means "electron" in Greek. About 600 B.C., Thales discovered electrical charge to be the property of amber, and so called his discovery.

b) *Syrinx* made from thrush sounds and some pan percussion, with thanks to Robert Beck for the source. "Syrinx" is a bird's organ of sound production, as well as the name of a Greek goddess who, to avoid Pan's advances, turned herself into reeds. Pan picked the reeds and from them he made his Pan pipes. Commissioned by Carolyn Builderbach, dancer.

c) *Episode* composed entirely of harpsichord sounds—the composer's notes were played on keyboard and strings of instrument, recorded for source, and built. *Episode* is a complete work in itself, but it is also used with a live harpsichord part and separated into several parts for *April-Episode*, a piece for live and tape harpsichord. *Episode* was notated to aid in the performance of *April-Episode* (see notation photograph). Ordinarily the tape is the score itself.

Side II

a) *Gateway Summer Sound*, a tape structure in six parts introduction, Three Bird Songs, Traffic, Epilogue.

Sound source: insects, bird, children's voices and land, air and sea traffic sounds—all found at Gateway National Recreation Area of the National Park Service, which surrounds New York Harbor.

Commissioned by Meet the Composer, for Gateway workshops in sound.

A dancer has been choreographed by Eva Zapfe to *Gateway Summer Sound*. Eva Zapfe, dancer of the Instituto Nacional Belles Artes, Mexico City, premiered her dance there early in 1979.

A hologram entitled "Gateway Sand — Feathers" was made by Dieter Jung on hearing *Gateway Summer Sound*. It was made and first shown in New York City. Jung, painter and filmmaker, works in New York City, West Berlin and Rio de Janeiro. (Pindexter Gallery—Uptown, N.Y.C.)

b) *Gong Song* made entirely on sounds made from "The Gong" sculpture of the late Frederick Kiesler (Frederick Estate, Andre Emmerich Gallery).

The sculpture was struck by the mallet which accompanies "The Gong," and recorded for source material by the composer and with permission of Lillian Kiesler at the Howard Wise Gallery—Short Version. Commissioned by The Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York City.

Ann McMillan is a recipient of the 1979 Rockefeller Foundation grant as a composer.

COVER: *Lanscape No. 1*, a charcoal drawing by Constance McMillan, who lives and works in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is represented by Alternate Space Gallery at West Broadway in New York City. She is the composer's sister.
Gateway Summer Sound

abstracted animal and other sounds

by Ann McMillan

**Side I**

a) **Amber '75**—sound sources: frogs and insects courtesy of Dr Richard Alexander, and one bell taped by composer. "Elektron" is the Greek word for amber. About 600 B.C., Thales discovered electrical charge to be a property of amber.

b) **Syrinx**—sound sources: thrush sounds, some pan percussion, with thanks to Robert Beck who provided the bird tape. "Syrinx" is a bird's organ of sound production, as well as the name of a Greek goddess who, to avoid Pan's advances, turned herself into reeds. Pan picked the reeds and from them made his pipes. Commissioned by Carolyn Bilderkon, dancer.

c) **Episode**—composed entirely of harpsichord sounds. Notation was played on the keyboard and strings of the instrument, recorded and transformed by the composer. This is one of two versions of the piece. The second version, called **April·Episode**, is for live and tape harpsichord. Notation of the tape part is needed to aid the performer (see illustration page 2).

**Side II**

a) **Gateway Summer Sound**—sound sources: insects, birds, children's voices and land, air and sea traffic from Gateway National Recreation Area of the National Park Service which surrounds New York Harbor.

- **Introduction**
- **Three Bird Songs**
- **Traffic**
- **Epilogue**

Commissioned by Meet the Composer, for Gateway workshops in sound.

Eva Zapfe, has choreographed a dance called "Gateway" to Gateway Summer Sound. It was premiered by her group, the Feron Ensemble in Mexico City, May 1979.

Dieter Jung, painter and film maker, composed a hologram entitled "Gateway Sand Feathers" for Gateway Summer Sound. It was first shown in New York City, 1978. Jung is represented by the Pointedex Gallery Uptown, N.Y.C.

b) **Gong Song**—sound source: "The Gong," sculpture by the late Frederick Kiesler (Frederick Kiesler Estate, Andre Emmerich Gallery).

The sculpture, struck by the mallet which accompanies "The Gong," was recorded by the composer at the Howard Wise Gallery with permission of Lilian Kiesler.

Concert version of a piece commissioned by The Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York City.

**Composer's Notes**

Every composer must have an individual palette of sound, and in recent years there has been a greater choice of sources than ever before. About 1905 Edgard Varèse began to explore possibilities beyond traditional Western musical instruments by his use of two sirens purchased in a Paris flea market. "With these I made my first experiments in what later I called spacial music...the haunting tones made me aware for the first time of the myriads of music outside the narrow limits imposed by keyboard instruments." The Varèse compositions scored for unconventional instruments (siren, theremin, organized sounds on tape, etc.) are well-known even though many of his ideas are still ahead of their time. I had the privilege of working with Varèse as his student-assistant, and his influence on me has been enormous. I had already been well-prepared by Otto Luening at Bennington College. As a teacher he introduced me to the vast range of music, past and present. Luening, a pioneer, was, with Vladimir Ussachevsky, the first to record electronic pieces in this country.

Scientific research of animal sounds first came to my attention in the fifties. I was fascinated by the extension of our hearing, via new recording technology, to sounds never before heard by human ears: fish sounds and mammal sounds in the sea, minute and large sounds, and even, as a few scientists believe, the remaining sounds of the Big Bang! I wanted to use some of these natural sounds as an alternative to industrial and electrically generated sounds often used by the first electronic composers; however the breakthrough in recording quality that would make this possible did not occur until the sixties. In the meantime, encouraged by Varèse, I applied for and was awarded a grant. This enabled me to leave a job as music editor of classic LPs at RCA Victor Recording Co. I went to the Musique Concrète studio of Pierre Schaeffer in Paris **to further investigate recording techniques for musical composition.**

On my return to the States, I acquired my first tape machine and soon after my first natural sounds—the sounds of sea animals, appropriately from Dr. Marie Poland Fish who was retiring from the Narragansett Marine Laboratory. Dr. Donald Griffin, pioneer in animal echolocation, kindly put me in touch with other helpful scientists. And so began my adventures with animal sounds.

Collecting such sound sources has given me a huge appreciation of animal sounds, and the realization that many of these animals, and therefore their sounds, are endangered. I feel strongly that the war for ecological balance and against pollutants is not beyond composers' concern. Not at all! For without winning that war, how can we compose and enjoy fully any art—let alone life itself. A while ago, a New York paper published an article about elephants wearing earmuffs. It seems that an airport calls a nearby zoo to warn of noisy aircraft arrivals in time for zookeepers to put earmuffs on their

- The first tape studio for composers.
elephants before they go berzerk. We must reverse this insanity before all animals, including ourselves, go deaf or berzerk. Though borrowing animal sounds for composing was begun for musical reasons, I would certainly be happy if, in the smallest way, this work helps others to reevaluate sounds in our environment.

After thirty-one years, electronic music is still at its very beginning. Before long, I believe, many kinds of electronic technologies will be combined in ways still more helpful to composers in realizing musical ideas. International activity is increasing and, either alone or combined with performing instruments, the range of possibilities for electronic composition is only beginning to be discovered. It appears that new outlets for its performance and new demands for listening are spiraling—spiraling, I'm happy to say, in a spiral of fifths.

I wish to thank the Princeton-Columbia Electronic Music Center for making its studios available to me. I'd also like to express my gratitude to a few relatives and many friends who have supported me in many ways. This record is dedicated to them and to all its listeners.
The Gong, 1963-64. Cast posthumously, 1969
Bronze and aluminum, and steel chain, 108 x 102 x 24
Mrs. Frederick Kiesler, New York
BIOGRAPHY

Ann McMillan was born in New York City and grew up in New England, England and Wisconsin. She graduated from Bennington College in 1945, having majored in Composition and French Horn. She helped open the LP program for classical music at RCA Victor Records and in the fifties met Edgard Varèse. She became his student and assisted him on the tape portions of his Deserts. From 1955 to 1957, she worked with a Fulbright Grant in Paris at the Radiodiffusion Télévision Francaise Studio d'Essai on “Recording Techniques for Music Composition.” On return to the States, she worked for their overseas studio in New York, composed a film score for Rhino Safari, a Norwegian documentary, and broadcast radio essays written for CBS’s French and English networks. In 1965 she became Music Director of radio station WBAI-FM in New York City. She left the station staff in 1968 to concentrate on composing. Since then, Ann McMillan has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, a CAPS grant and resident fellowships at the MacDowell Colony and Ossabaw Island Project. Current commissions include an orchestra work for Joel Thome’s orchestra of Our Time of New York City, and a violin and tape piece for Manuel Enriquez of Mexico City. April-Episode, for live and tape part harpsichord, was performed by Joseph Payne at Fenton House, London’s Camden Festival, March 30, 1979. The tape part of that piece is a complete piece in itself, called Episode.

“[Ann McMillan’s] pieces deal with human vocal sounds, insect sounds, bird calls, and water sounds, but like all of McMillan’s materials, they are altered almost beyond recognition. It’s a little like what happens to visual images when they get transformed into a Klee or a de Kooning...McMillan, a former Varèse student, has a sensitive ear....”

Tom Johnson, The Village Voice

Ann McMillan is recorded on Folkways Records
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