

**Quicksilver for Flute and Pre-recorded Sound  
Program Note by the Composer**

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without the permission of the composer)*

*Quicksilver*, for flute and pre-recorded sound, is an amalgamation of acoustic, analog, and digital sounds. The majority of the original pre-recorded material was created at the venerable Columbia Princeton Electronic Music Studio at Columbia University using “ancient” analog synthesizers (Buchla’s and so on). The raw sound was then manipulated through banks of even older analog filters and other “black boxes.” The equipment didn’t always work as advertised: I couldn’t predict exactly what I would come up with and rarely could repeat what I had done. The process was “ephemeral,” to say the least: less dependent upon skill, and more dependent upon the temperature of the room and equipment, and chance. But, I did end up with some great, fat, grungy “accidents” - sounds that probably couldn’t have been attained otherwise.

Initially the process was 1. Capture big chunks of these sounds on reel-to-reel tape. 2. Splice and edit them. 3. Filter and mix the sounds 4. Repeat steps 1-3. In the process I gained renewed respect for the early practitioners of *musique concrete*... and nearly went crazy. The problem was I wanted much of my raw material to be musically exact: heard at specific pitches and with specific rhythms. One day I talked to a friend of mine who had a digital recording studio – in the days when that was still a rarity. His offer of help led to the best of both worlds as I digitally sampled my reels of “messy” analog sounds and was finally able to edit, control, and manipulate them with a level of precision, speed, and whimsy that was nearly impossible in the analog studio (If not for Jeff Layton I’d probably still be working in the old analog studio even now).

All of the gestures and harmonic materials in *Quicksilver* came from the original analog sounds. They became “found objects” to me. My ear would perk up at something, I would transcribe it, and then experiment with it, have it seep into my musical hearing, and decide if it was suitable for the piece. It became a question of harnessing what I had culled. The work is in a simple slow-fast-slow form. The title refers to the quixotic nature and brevity of the piece, as well as the color of the flute.

*Quicksilver* was composed for flutist Margaret Lancaster, who premiered the piece on a program of electronic music performed in honor of Mario Davidovsky at the Kathryn Bache Miller Theatre in New York City. I would like to especially thank Jeff Layton of JLSA Studios for his invaluable help in successfully realizing the work.

Joel Phillip Friedman

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