Lisa Bielawa

WWW.LISABIELAWA.NET

Note

Premiere:	April 12, 2015, Weston, MA. The Rivers School and Rivers School Conservatory for the 37th Annual Seminar on Contemporary Music for the Young
Duration:	c. 15 – 20'
Instrumentation:	big band; chamber orchestra (2031; 0000; strings) ; piano; double bass; 2 percussionists

Life on 21st-century earth means multiple mediated forms of information-getting and information-giving, which has a big impact on our understanding of narrative time – an understanding that has defined us to ourselves ever since our species first evolved. Any text on paper or utterance spoken in real time presents a story, and a traditional story presents itself linearly. While writers have been fascinated with the idea of exploding this linear imperative since long before the age of the web (consider Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, written in 1962), the age of the hypertext – the link within a text that takes one to another text, interrelated to still other texts – has brought us into a robust new world of narrative plurality and enmeshment, in which hypertext fiction writers can explore the mathematical boundaries of interrelated stories. Says Wikipedia of hypertext: "The reader typically chooses links to move from one node of text to the next, and in this fashion arranges a story from a deeper pool of potential stories."

Hypermelodia has at its core just such a deeper pool of potential stories, but instead of the reader clicking on a hypertext to be transported to another narrative, it is two of the musical performers (on double bass and percussion) who decide what 'link' to choose at multiple moments within the piece, sending the listener off on a story that unfolds according to the wills of these two musicians, in real time. A big band and an orchestra provide the narrative fragments, while a small team of soloists (the two decision-makers and their allies on piano and drum kit) navigate the "links" between these two larger groups. In the process of composing the piece I, too, found myself navigating hyperlinks to graph theory (which helped me organize the decision-making mechanics such that the piece is guaranteed to end within a certain amount of time, regardless of what decisions my two browsing performers may make), and the metrical interrelations and polyrhythmic possibilities of swing waltz, rumba, salsa and bolero tempos (which govern the transitions from band sections to orchestra sections).

In the midst of all of it, there are opportunities for many of the individual musicians to tell their own stories, in solos both virtuosic and improvised, and for the accustomed stylistic voices of these different groups to speak within the context of a larger hyperstory.
　　　　　– Lisa Bielawa