

Don Freund: *Dissolving Music*
Rockpiece for Soprano and Six Instruments (1978)
Duration: ca. 9 minutes

Dissolving Music is a "Rockpiece for Soprano and Six Instruments" setting W. S. Merwin's poem "For a Dissolving Music". One of the "instruments" is a drumset augmented by vibes, tuned cowbells, and suspended water-filled paint-cans. The soprano is asked to deliver the words and music in a style that emulates Grace Slick, Mariah Carey, and Jan de Gaetani; the remaining instrumentation (flute, trombone, violin, cello, and piano) and performance style (the instrumentalists are asked to sing, play a little percussion, and render some heavy duty rock'n'roll) reflect the attitude and showpiece style of OMNIBUS, a new music ensemble that lived and died in Memphis in the late '70's.

The text of Merwin's poem is given below:

FOR A DISSOLVING MUSIC

What shall be seen?
Limbs of a man
old and alone,
his shadow with him,
going and gone.

What shall be heard?
A hollow rime:
the heart gone tame
knocking afraid.

What shall be known?
Briefly the name,
but its frame shaken,
house of time
blown and broken,
draughty room,
dwindled flame,
red coal come
out of the warm,
dry honeycomb,
ended dream.

What shall be said?
This word if any:
Time and blood
are spent money,
rain in a sieve;
summer is dead
(whom fools believe)
in a far grave,
worms receive

her fire to wive,
fear walks alive,
prayers I would weave,
pains I have,
hopes not many;
wherefore grieve
o splintered stave,
withered glove,
dry groove,
shaken sleeve
empty of love.

What shall be sung?
This song uneven:
eleven, seven,
chance cloven,
joints spavin,
blood-chill-driven,
flesh craven,
breath not often,
teeth riven,
all day shriven,
last coven,
all night raven,
all doom woven,
none forgiven,
no curse ungraven,
no peace at even,
remnant for leaven,
promise true-given,
field but shaven,
nor hope of heaven.

FOR A DISSOLVING MUSIC c 1954 by William S. Merwin. Permission granted by the author.