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LIGHTNING

Lightning has always inspired strong feelings of both fascination and fear. This force that once seemed to be the arbitrary, unpredictable punishment sent by an angry and whimsical god has become better understood. Our knowledge, gained through weather balloons, airplanes and satellites, has not, however, diminished our sense of awe. We have simply replaced an omnipotent will with a set of scientifically described electrical interactions that remain equally unpredictable and arbitrary, from our point of view. The sense of uncertainty and anxiety that we feel while watching bolts of fire crack open the sky, never knowing where or when the next one will appear, has not been diminished. Lightning can become an almost hypnotic force, always familiar yet never the same. One can observe this type of phenomenon much in the same way as one participates in a slowly unfolding ritual. It is not just one or two aspects of this celestial process that are in motion but rather the whole system is in continuous renewal: only the basic framework remains constant.

The piece **LIGHTNING** attempts to capture this process from the perspective of a single cloud. When interpreted musically, the slow rising and suddenly diminishing energy that produces bolts of lightning within a cloud, will create a slowly developing progression which takes on the kind of ritual aspects described above. The resonance of the piano, created bit by bit as notes are added into the sustain pedal induced mass, represents a storm laden cloud. In nature the energy contained within the cloud is grouped around immobile charge centers at various altitudes; whereas for the piano, energy centers are represented in different registers. The energy present in the piano's resonance gradually but continuously increases until finally a threshold is reached and a musical bolt of lightning is released. The true nature of this climax, however, is not an explosion of power, but, as within the cloud, silence. The energy that slowly engorged the piano shaping its color and intensity disappears in an instant. This climax may be complete or partial. It may be immediately followed by a return stroke, a small echo of the energy that was discharged. An empty resonance is then ready to begin the process again. The threshold and pacing will be different and thus the color and structure of each event unique. As when watching a storm, there is a sense of similarity between the elements as they circulate, are transformed and return; yet nothing is ever the same. As one tries to hold onto bits and pieces of the constantly shifting texture the listener is pulled into the slowly evolving ritual of transformation and renewal.

LIGHTNING is the last of a series of three pieces ("**...a ripple-ringed pool...**" and **ORIGINS** were the first two) that attempt to use natural phenomena involving energy as the points of departure for pieces of music. Processes involving changes in energy become the narrative thread that can spread across all aspects of a musical texture. One can begin to hear things that are normally only contemplated, feel the inner workings of the Earth, in a sense, eavesdrop on nature.