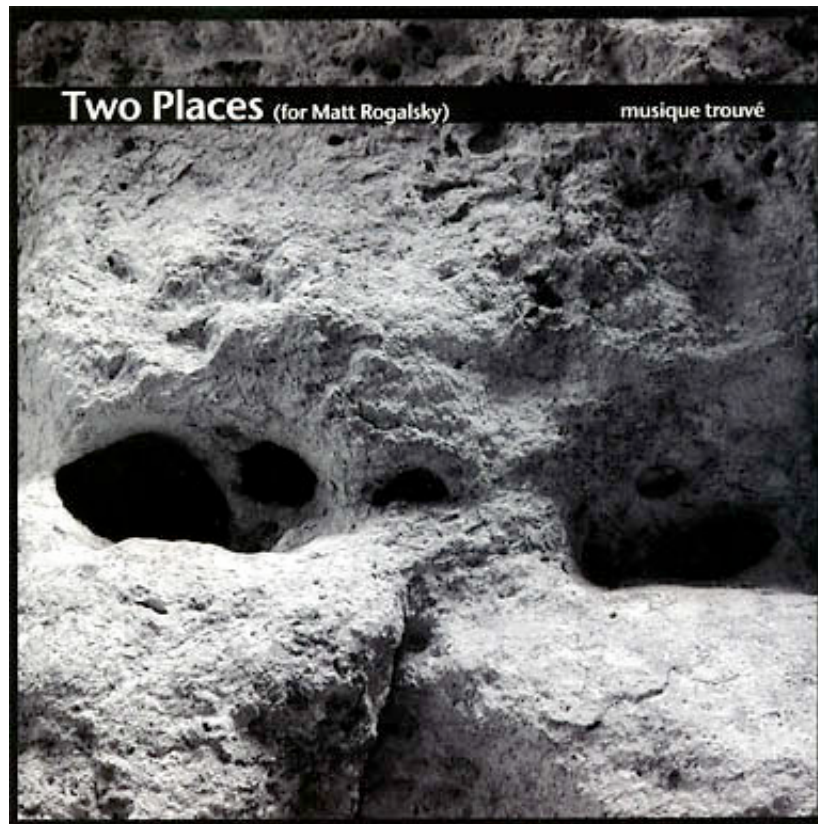


Ralph Lichtensteiger; two places



Ralph Lichtensteiger – Two Places for Matthew Rogalsky [2005]
Ralph Lichtensteiger [piano, percussion, environment sound treatment]
musique trouvée; edition of 50 CDs. Duration: 63:57

1. Two Places part 1 (2005) 48:26] (piano & overlapping environment sounds, sparse percussion)

2. Two Places part 2 (2005) [15:31] (piano & FontanaNet sounds arranged by the composer)

[A place is at the same time no-place.](#)

Experience, imagine two places at the same time.

[Listen while between two places.](#)

Two places simultaneously, synchronous.

[Musical topography of two places.](#)

No-place, loss of place, dispossession.

[To be out of place or act in place of.](#)

Area with definite or indefinite boundaries; a portion of space.

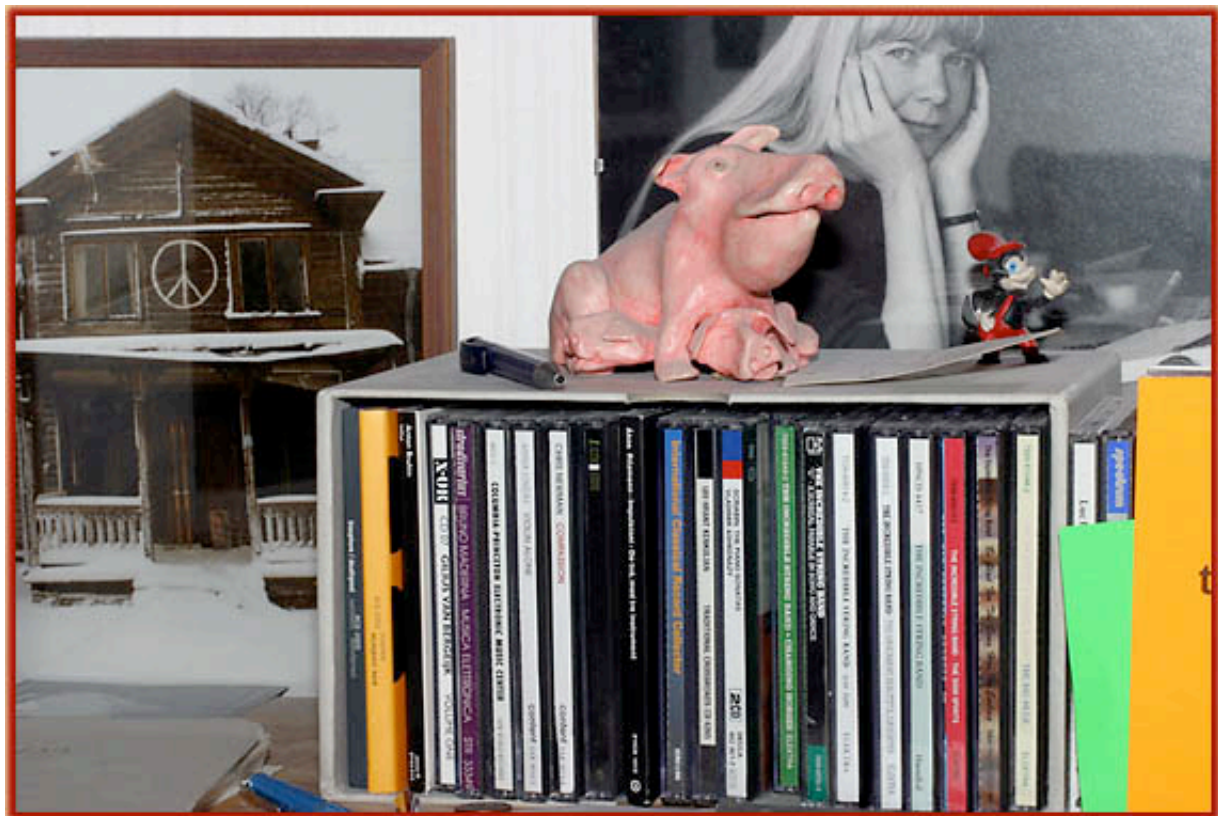
[Area set aside for a particular purpose.](#)

A particular situation or circumstance: Put yourself in my place.

Relative position in a series; standing.

(From the booklet)

I've been sitting in a dark room listening to some of **Beethoven**'s late string quartets. Outside is late winter, or if you prefer; very early spring. The ice in the middle of the bike route from town has molten away, leaving the sand that the city workers spread exposed on the asphalt, and not until all ice is gone and the sand has been swept away has real spring come.



Aspects on Living, No. 21

(concept & photograph: Ingvar Loco Nordin)

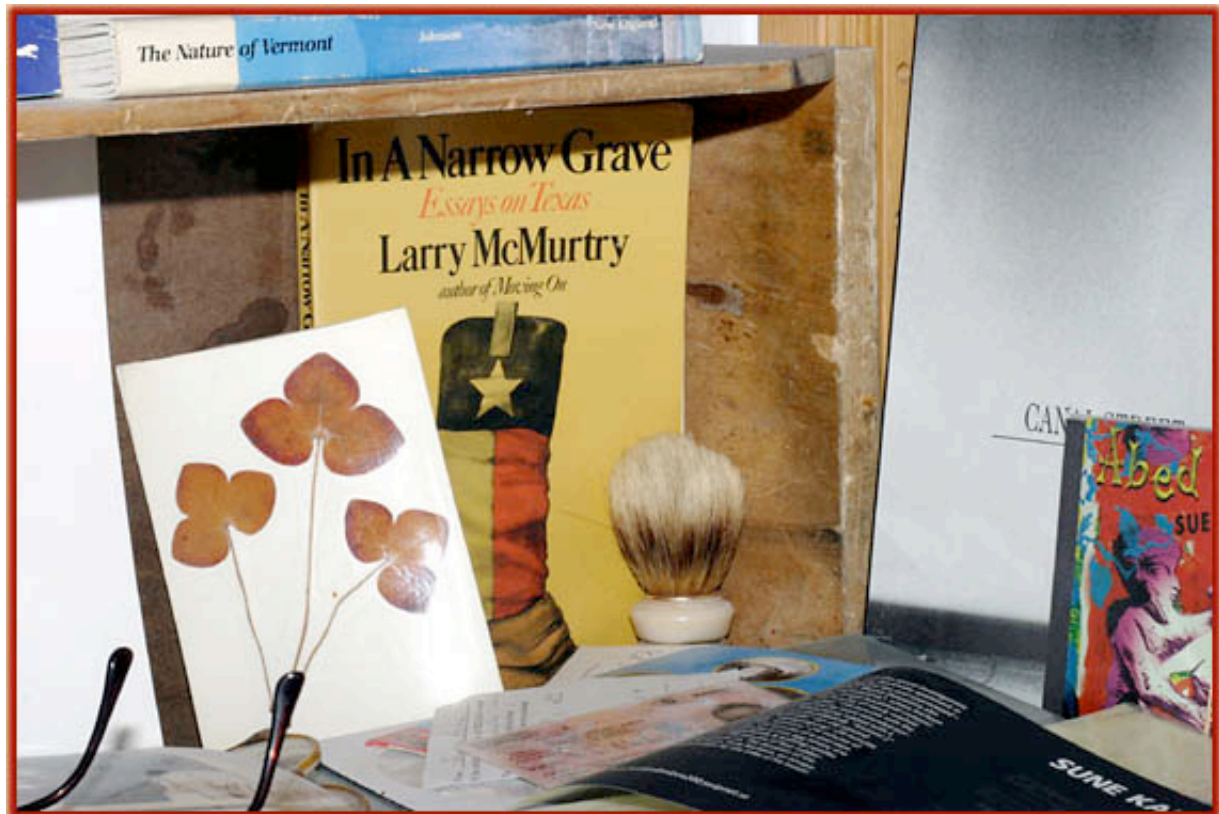
A dark room with **Beethoven**'s late quartets is a restful and necessary place sometimes, and as I stepped out of that room into my study where the Macintosh hard drives hum and the screen leaks its bleak light across the keyboard I felt prepared to enter into the realm of this **Lichtensteiger** CD, which in fact takes me even deeper into the protected realm of **Beethoven**'s inward monologue, and beyond that space, through door after door, new rooms opening, one after the other, deeper and deeper inside **Self**, towards a core state where the **I and the Thou** merge into that which Is.

So restful is this music, like drops slowly collecting on the tips of icicles in the sun, eventually to fall towards the ground, in involuntary obedience of gravitational laws of celestial bodies...

The ambience comes first, opening a silence of space, of place – an un-saying kind of

silence, un-spoken, like a simple truth that no one opposes; just a matter of fact, like the observation of drops falling off of icicles – but here the space is obvious, an open, human space, cars sweeping past in the periphery of perception; an angulation of body walking across a square, 90 degrees and long winter shadows of northern hemispheres...

Then – a piano tone, crisp through this sounding that only amplifies the silence in which the sounding sounds – and the piano note brings color into this sphere around the observer, this open suburb town square of 90 degree angles, a low sun and those stretching shadows; color and clarity ... suspension without direction; hovering thoughts of clarity...



Aspects on Living, No. 57

(concept & photograph: Ingvar Loco Nordin)

This is **Ralph Lichtensteiger's Two Places, Part I**, with the subtext “piano & overlapping environment sounds, spare percussion”. This well describes the framework of the composition, though it hardly gives a real hint at the spacious sparseness, the lofty sensation of transparency, of well measured silence, falling through time like benevolence through dark ages...

The piece is more than 48 minutes long, allowing for a feeling of timelessness to precipitate within your consciousness, altering the concepts of time and space considerably, if you're at the sensitive and impressionable end of your day, perhaps having just stepped out of a dark room filled with late **Beethoven** quartets...

Other piano tones fall through the soundscape, Feldmanesque, but more sparse, even – the environment with its misty sounds of passing vehicles lightened by far-off children's voices and occasional birds – and it goes on and on, building a laid-back anticipation into the system; a safely exciting preparedness – like the feeling of sitting on your porch the first day of spring when the sun is warm enough for that, if you just wrap a coat around your shoulder... until you get up, shrug a little and step inside for some hot coffee.



Aspects on Living, No. 379

(concept & photograph: Ingvar Loco Nordin)

Stockhausen – at the summer courses in **Kuerten** - talks about colored silences, meaning silences inside his musical works; silences with some sonic properties, like wind or water drops or even more inconspicuous sonorities. I can't find a better definition for the thin, misty ambience that **Lichtensteiger** paints in thin layers across his sonic canvas, on which the sparse, almost shockingly clear and contoured piano tones stick like glued-on pieces of crystal, beautifully measured out in uneven patterns, which, however, have madly recurring, repetitious properties.

Lichtensteiger lets the consciousness loose, and all the consciousness wants is to soar, hover, suspended across the clear eye of **Rigpa** – and soars it does: the music reports back!

Long rests in the music are outlined in the kamikaze calligraphy of dashing swifts of July; wondrous, shrieking high-pitch trajectories between the buildings of a township.

A distant roar spills down from the heavens above, traced by the white streaks of exhaust from a soaring, intercontinental jetliner winging towards distant futures...

The piano tones more fill the function of Place than anything else; like were they the spatial, invisible content of Place, the inward focus of the Place, that which is the content of the Place without regard to how that place has been filled in the material world, with flower pots, old men's benches, cesspools, paving-stones, park trees and so forth; simply the specifications of the Place at its certain longitude and latitude; a space specification that also holds other, elusive properties beyond our usual senses; that of Place.

Lichtensteiger has filled me with a certain, attentive respect for Place in that context,

through his pianistic and percussive reflections of the inner contents of Place. The relation between the place at hand and the Place as such is similar to that of a chair and the concept of the function of chair – but not exactly. A dimension is missing when you put it like that. It borders on **Plato**'s theory of forms, his idea about ideals and the shadows they cast into our material obsession.

The feeling, or sense, of this state of affairs concerning Place, is magically conveyed through **Ralph Lichtensteiger**'s work **Two Places, part 1**. I could listen forever, since the immediacy of this focused emptiness is so lustful, so tempting – like a preview of an enlightened state, of Nirvana.



Aspects on Living, No. 7229

(concept & photograph: Ingvar Loco Nordin)

Two Places, part 2, commences in the chirping of birds and the wheezing of insects, whereas the piano is just a continuation of the part 1 piano – to begin with. Soon the piano talks much livelier, in different timbres, more varied spatial placements, and in different layers, simultaneously on-going; a bit bewildering after the soaring rest of **part 1**.

There is more to **part 2** than what first meets the ear. The subtitle says: piano & FonataNet sounds by [Matt Rogalsky](#) – and further is explained that it's a networked realization of **John Cage**'s **Fontana Mix** in a mix of an 8-channel performance of may 30, 2002 with **Anne Wallmer**, **Jem Finer** and **Matt Rogalsky** at **University of East Anglia, UK**.

Whatever the method, the result is startling and extremely enjoyable for sound and space connoisseurs, as well as out-of-whack nature buffs! There is enough stuff in here for any intellect with some serious anomaly – and it's also very beautiful to hear for anybody, even for perfectly normal citizens (if they indeed do exist; I've never met one...)

High praise to **Ralph Lichtensteiger** for **Two Places**! It has been a completely unexpected experience, taking me places where I've never been before!



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