



Edward Lee  
**Bonny Street**

## TRACK LIST BONNY STREET

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### NOTES ON *BONNY STREET*

After the break-up of CMU (or at least the original version –see www), I returned to teaching and moved to London (on New Year's Eve 1971) to 5 Bonny Street, Camden Town. There were many difficulties, above all the failure of such great hopes. There was a need to return to a life I thought I had given up - the regular teaching job -, and a period before I could take up my old full time post again. But I had by this time remarried, and so the most central part of my life was optimistic and joyful.

Music making was not easy – we lived in a one room flat with a small kitchen and bathroom – but I had guitars and some effects. Consequently, I can understand some of the problems faced by the pioneers of electronic music. Everything was reel-to-reel on - in one instance I actually used 1<sup>7/8</sup> ips speed because I did not have enough tape – a large expense for me then ! I created long loops, reverberations and delays by making a loop tape (about 6 feet long at times), which went through my Watkins Copicat echo unit. And I had my Sony....tape recorder. And above all, a supportive and understanding wife.

I think it is for this reason that it was a highly productive period musically. For that reason this pair of CDs is dedicated to Frances.

I was able to take my music where I would have gone if the group had continued and been supportive. And there was a warmth and richness which came from my inner state.

In terms of sound there was also the warmth created by analogue equipment, and by sound-on-sound recording.

The latter has been one of the biggest difficulties in realising this music now, with all the ease and clarity offered by digital music making. This makes the parts easier to hear and enjoy- important because much of this is linear music. But I have had to work hard to recreate the warmth. I hope it is successful.

## **CD 1**

### **Polish Jig**

The main rhythm is a powerful rock triplet beat, probably inspired by certain jazz and rock drum solos, but there is a release into a solid heavy four. The title came from James Gordon, who in trying to characterise the piece said it seemed to him like "a sort of mad Polish jig" !

### **Summer Solstice**

The Solstice pair of pieces were written as a celebration of my coming to know my wife. The Summer Solstice was around the time when we met and also her birthday. Like the time of year, the piece is full of light, optimism and beauty, though there is also more than a hint of a pagan element.

### **Winter Solstice**

We were married on the day of the Winter Solstice. The mood is quieter, but grows steadily in intensity. Again there is an optimism as we begin the move towards summer.

### **Canon**

There is a mood to this piece but I haven't thought of a title to express it, so it keeps its original working title, which indicates its form. The polyphonic music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods has long interested me and while studying Music I found it a great challenge to create polyphonic pieces which also had character and life.

A canon has a melody against which are placed copies of various types (known as "imitations") following at given intervals of time as the melody unfolds. Most people are familiar with one type – the round (eg *Frere Jacques*, *Row Row Row Your Boat*).

I wished to use this technique with modern materials, notably a folk-like melody, and a drum line which is there, not for timekeeping, but to add the tension which the addition of drums typically generates.

## **The Tempest**

These themes were written for a play by Bill Martin in which extracts from the Shakespeare play were featured. I always wished to develop them further. In part I did so in *Caliban Calypso* (available as a free download at <http://www.elmvillagearts.co.uk/words-and-music-scripts.php>). In this realisation the mood can be summed up in Shakespeare's own words: *Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,/Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not./Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments/Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices... and All torment, trouble, wonder and amazement/Inhabits here: some heavenly power guide us/Out of this fearful country!*

## **New Three Part Work**

As this album shows, I was very interested, at the time this music was created, in exploring the use of classical forms in a rock context. One of these was the work with several movements, which had attracted me since my Oxford days (see the *Blues Suite*, the *English Suite* and the *Isis Suite* at <http://www.elmvillagearts.co.uk/free-downloads/oxford-university-big-band.php>). One of these, *Three Part Work*, had been well received in the early days of CMU (versions can be heard at <http://www.elmvillagearts.co.uk/free-downloads/the-leeds-concert.php>).

But I was aware of what I had not attempted or achieved in that work and so set myself to create a new work of the type, with three movements – *Strut*, *Peace* and *Rondo*.

### ***Strut***

The title explains it all. This is the proud young man, aiming to impress, in all his fashionable finery – this was looking back to the time before the young put aside dressing up in favour of a more casual style. The form is clearly audible, but I believe does not lose a rock-pop excitement.

### ***Peace***

The name again says it all. Traditionally the second movement is often light and joyous, as it was in the original *Three Part Work*. Here, I wanted a movement of calm reflection and being in contrast to the vigour of the first and third movements.

### ***Rondo***

The title refers to the form, in which a repeating section alternates with new ideas. This is the lively finale to the work.

## **Los Alamos 1944**

Los Alamos in New Mexico was the site of the laboratory where the first atomic bomb was created. The site was set up in 1943 and the first explosion was in July 1945. In 1944 there was therefore intense but secret effort at Los Alamos, while in the outer world young Americans were drafted into the armed forces and sent either to the Far East or Europe. Being young, they made the most of opportunities to enjoy themselves, and especially in jitterbugging to the sound of the Swing big bands. As a child I was to some extent aware of the latter, but it was only later that we all became aware of the nightmare of nuclear weapons

In this piece I wanted to create a sense of the contrast between the joy of youth energised by the riffing of Swing music (which is lightly parodied here – the local big band is not very good, but everyone is having a great time). But meanwhile the dancers are unaware of the impending destruction and chaos which was secretly being set irreversibly into motion.

## **CD 2**

### **Running into Waves**

Again the title says it. The theme aims to capture the exhilaration of rushing into the sea, when the sun is hot (and hopefully the sea is warm !). I happily acknowledge some detailed inspiration from the solo played by Felix Cross, which I have on a version recorded on a domestic tape recorder.

### **Two riff pieces**

These were two ideas in which I explored setting riffs against each other. I feel that each piece embodies a mood, but I have never been able to pinpoint what – suggestions welcomed !

#### ***Riff 1***

This has a steady insistence and a sense of space for me reminiscent of *Canon*.

#### ***Riff 2***

This explores resonance and dissonance. The reverberation shows a 50s pop influence, and is so marked that for me it becomes menacing. Like various of my pieces, it puts earlier pop through a distortig mirror.

### **Three pieces for James Gordon**

After the break-up of CMU (or at least the original version), James set off on a voyage of self-discovery which he describes semi-autobiographically in his books (see [www.shantiluyah.co.uk](http://www.shantiluyah.co.uk)). One day while he was there there I received a letter, postmarked Katmandu, which told us that, whatever his spiritual stage, he had certainly found a wife.

Weddings have always created a great sense of joy in me, and have often inspired music. So it was on this occasion.

#### ***A Letter from Katmandu***

The title is self-explanatory. There are two themes which interweave, reflecting the fact that the couple have found each other.

#### ***Calcutta Wedding***

The swinging rhythm expresses the light-heartedness and joy of the occasion, and again two themes interweave. We also hear wedding bells in the distance, but they have a strangely Indian tinge...

### ***For a Child***

By that time I was a father, and so was aware that children are for most people what truly seals the marriage covenant and takes it into another dimension. So here I was looking to James' future. I have since found that Sylvia Plath's poem *Morning Song* catches something of the deep inner stillness (with just a hint of tears) which I wanted to convey: *All night your moth-breath/Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:/A far sea moves in my ear.*

### **Bells**

In my mid-teens I went on a school trip to see the chateaux of the Loire Valley. It was my first visit to France. One of my most striking memories was going to Rouen Cathedral, and going up the tower. This was during the Easter holidays and it was very strange to a boy brought up on atheism (at home) and very sober Anglicanism (at school) to enter a Catholic cathedral shrouded in deepest black for Passiontide. Then, while we were up the bell tower, the bells began to clang – which was even more staggering to someone whose only experience was the bells of St Mary's, Nottingham, as we approached in procession on Founder's Day. Those were lighter and of course more distant. This piece attempts to catch something of the resonance and impressiveness of the French sound, with a strong hint of the darkness which the old clergy must have wished to invoke, especially as Easter approached.

### **The River**

I have always been attracted by rivers, perhaps not surprising, as their fascinating mixture of the slow silent power of the natural, and the beliefs associated with them over many centuries have been a frequent topics for writers( eg Peter Ackroyd's *Thames: Sacred River* or Eliot's lines: *The nymphs are departed./And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors*).

I therefore tried to evoke several moods of two rivers well known to me – the Thames, and Oxford's Cherwell.

### **Source**

The piece begins with the lightness of mood, and at times sense of mystery you find at the very beginnings of a river. The piece soon broadens out, as does the Thames – it always surprises me that it happens so quickly.

### **Waterway**

This is the Thames as it moves towards and through London – rowers, leisure boats, barges, and also the memories of pictures of earlier times with ferrymen and royal barges.

### **Pool**

My river is an imaginary place, so this pool is a memory of the Cherwell, with trees shading the punters on a warm summer day.

### **Torrent**

This is the other side of the river, fortunately only seen on the Thames rarely. Really this comes from memories of the Derwent in Derbyshire, or of rivers in Scotland.

## Two hours before the end of the world

This piece was originally called *Avantgarde passaglia* (for want of a better title) and reflected my desire to blend two musical interests. The passacaglia was a series of variations over a bass ostinato – one of the most famous examples is the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*, BWV 582, for organ by Johann Sebastian Bach. The polyphonic music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods has long interested me as have repeated basses – for instance in boogie woogie and as rock bass riffs. At the same time I wanted to fuse the the sense of freedom, intensity and dissolution I found in free jazz and various areas of rock.

In 2009 Moira Jarvis painted *Early Spring*. Despite the title, I felt that the painting had a brooding and disturbing quality. I decided to write some music expressing this, and also to begin an ongoing project called Sound Paintings, featured on my website (<http://www.elmvillagearts.co.uk/sound-paintings.php>), in which viewing a picture and hearing music were combined.

I then realised that the mood – beauty combined with menace - was very much the character of *Avantgarde passaglia*. In particular, two guitars, using a call and response technique, present a varying theme. Working against them, another pair of guitars (one using delay, the other distortion) present much more dissonant ideas. The “counterthemes” are not so much complementary as antagonistic.

For years the only version of the piece was on a  $1\frac{7}{8}$  ips (yes, dictophone speed !) tape, so this opportunity to realise the idea properly was a particularly great pleasure.

CD 1 Los Alamos 1944  
CD 2 The River

