

# MARSYAS



This concert is made possible in part through  
the generous support of Judith Rosenberg Hoffberger '54  
and the Henry and Ruth Blaustein Rosenberg Foundation.

W.R.N.  
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*may*

Fanfare  
Interlude\*  
Athena  
Goddess Duet  
Goddess Quartet  
Interlude\*  
Athena's Lament  
TrooFizz (Blues)  
Water Music  
Interlude\*  
Satyr Duet  
Midas  
Fugue  
Wander  
Apollo  
Epilogue\*

*\*Please note: These movements contain elements of acoustic processing. If you do not wish to become a part of the feedback loop, please remain as inaudible as is comfortable.*

**Statement:**

The program which you are about to enjoy consists of several musical sketches. The intention of these sketches is to explore possible themes and movements which may some day be assembled into a larger work. These pieces were composed during and just prior to my final field work term.

**Synopsis:**

The story of Marsyas the Satyr, son of Olympos, has long been a favorite to artists both classical and modern; appearing in the paintings of Raphael and Titian, the sculpture of Myron and many anonymous ancients.

I discovered Marsyas by accident and was immediately intrigued.

The tale begins with Athena, goddess of wisdom and victory, who has pierced a cattle bone with several holes and thus invented the first rudimentary flute. Athena plays the flute and it's sound brings her great joy. The other goddesses, however, are less than impressed with her playing and the vain Aphrodite tells Athena that the flute makes her cheeks puff out in an ugly fashion. This barb affects Athena's pride and so she descends Olympus in shame. Once safely in the land of Mortals, Athena finds a pool where she can see her face in the water. Upon playing the flute, Athena in disgusted by her appearance and discards the flute into the water.

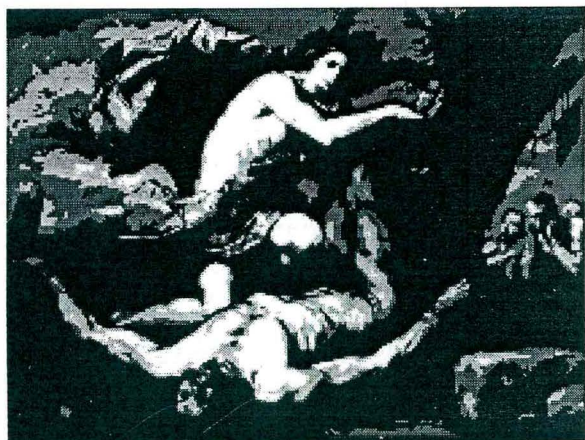
Nearby, the Satyr Marsyas has become captivated by the alien flute music and is inspired to locate its source and its performer. The music suddenly ceases and Marsyas in disheartened; until some moments later he notices a strange implement floating downstream from the pool.



Marsyas soon becomes the world's first virtuosic flautist and happily plays upon the found flute to pass the time. Until one day when he is approached by a stranger who does not like the sound of the Satyr's music, and declares that the strains of the lute are the only tunes worthy of the gods. Upon hearing this, Marsyas challenges the stranger to a musical duel. The stranger accepts and wagers his very skin against Marsyas' own hide.

There is a battle of epic proportions.

The two musicians trade melodies back and forth, each adding embellishments and ornaments to show their skill, and Marsyas soon emerges the victor. The stranger is Furious. He throws off his hood and shows himself to be the god Apollo. And then, to prove his greater musicianship and the superiority of his instrument, he turns his lute upside-down and plays one final tune. Marsyas, being unable to play his flute backwards, admits defeat, is lashed to a tree, and is flayed alive. His blood rushes forth and becomes the river Marsyas, whose waters still flow.



#### **Personnel:**

Bruce Williamson • Saxophones, Bass Clarinet  
Jacob Perkins • Tenor Saxophone  
Ryan Nestor • Alto Saxophone, Electronics  
Justin Vitello • Baritone Saxophone

#### **Special Thanks To:**

The performers, Particularly Bruce, for teaching and advising me for almost four years; My parents for convincing me college was a good idea; Becca for providing emotional and psychological support and for never complaining about the sound of MIDI saxophone patches at ungodly hours; All of my wonderful friends for putting up with me; Allen Shawn for supporting my advances as a composer; Stephen Siegal for introducing me to the method *behind* the madness and vice-versa; Dexter Wayne for recording and digging saxophones; The audience for showing up and reading the program; All of the librarians and random people in cyberspace who gently guided me in my research; Mocha Joe's Coffee house, Chock Full 'O nuts, and whoever abandoned the espresso machine I found in a dumpster; (who not so gently propelled me into my composing.) The old Gods, whose most valuable lesson was to always extend kindness to strangers.